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# COUNSELS OF A WORLDLY GODMOTHER



by

Persis Mather :

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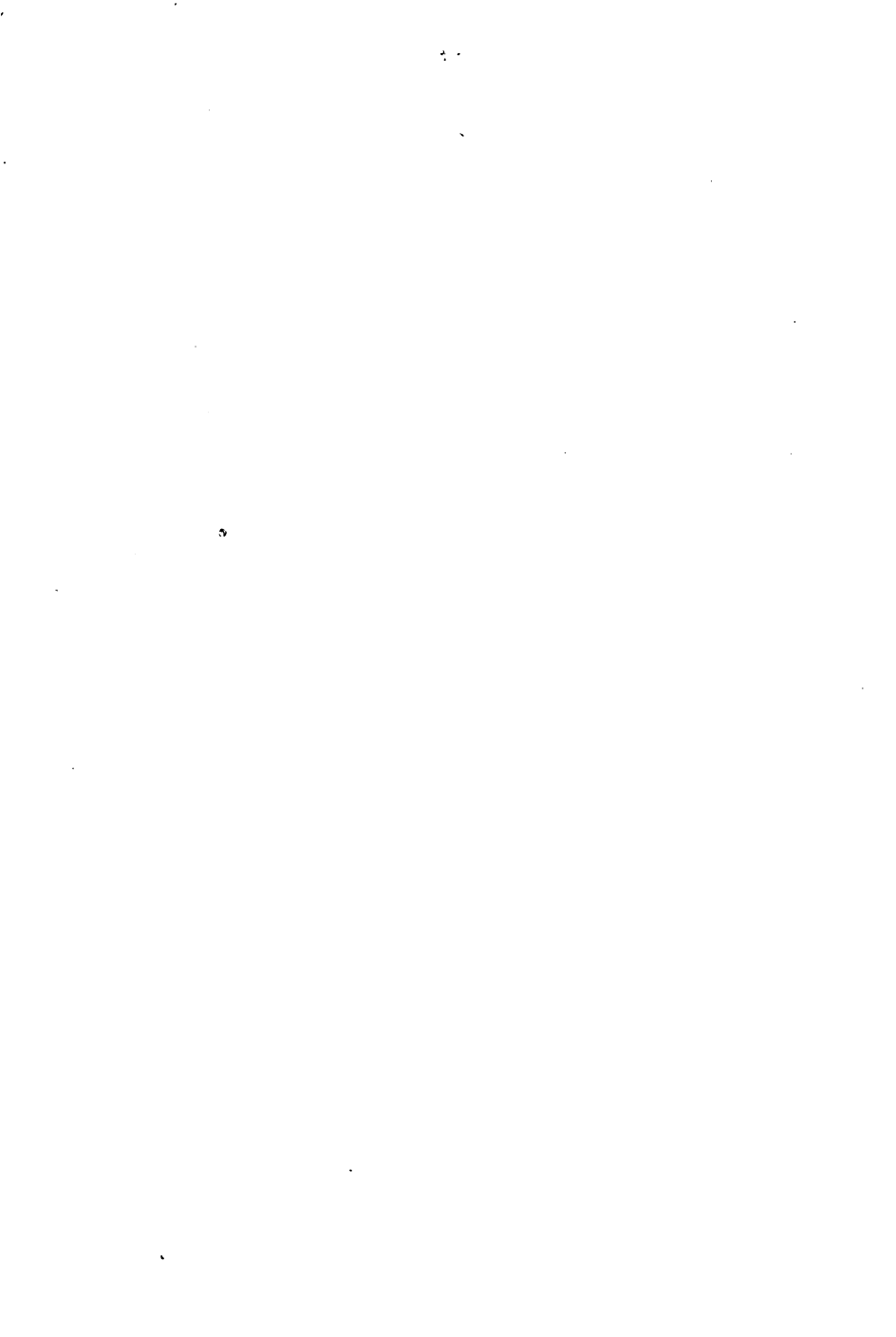






**THE COUNSELS OF  
A WORLDLY GODMOTHER**





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A WORLDLY GODMOTHER**

BY  
**PERSIS MATHER**



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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**THE COUNSELS OF  
A WORLDLY GODMOTHER**



# THE COUNSELS OF A WORLDLY GODMOTHER

## I

### A COUNSEL FROM YEARS

MY DEAR GODDAUGHTER: —

I went to a ball last night, and as I sat watching the dancing with one of the friends of my far-off bud-days, she began to speak of the time when we had just come out, and of the balls of that first year. Among other things she spoke of how different things are now, and wondered what had become of the row of dowagers we used to see sitting along the walls. "Is n't it strange," she concluded, "that they should have disappeared so entirely?" Then her husband, who happened to be with us, laughed in the most unfeelingly masculine manner. "You evidently don't realize," he returned, "that you are the dowagers sitting along the walls." And we were,



my dear! It was hardly polite of him to remind us of it in so brusque a fashion, but that did not alter the truth of it. We, under fifty as we both are, no doubt looked to the buds waltzing before us — and to my thinking waltzing for the most part with astonishingly little grace, I must say in revenge for their undoubted opinion of us! — as old and as completely superannuated as in those past days the chaperons appeared to us. It came over me with a force I had never felt before. I had known it; but in a moment, all in a flash, I saw myself as the buds saw me, and as you would have seen me had you been there.

I thought of you, partly because you have been in my mind a good deal of late from one cause or another, partly because the suggestion of my youth made me think of your dear mother, and partly because a queer feeling of self-reproach came over me that, although I am your godmother, I have done nothing in particular to fit you for that advent into the social world which you have just made. For the rest of the evening I meditated about you, and about your impressions of the world just

opening to you; and then and there I determined that I would begin at once to offer you the results of my observations of life. I do not in the least suppose you will pay much attention to the wisdom I have to give, for youth never does shape conduct by the sage maxims of its elders. Your generation, moreover, seems to me the least tractable that ever drew the breath of life. Only the fact that my grandmother used to say much the same thing of mine makes me feel that in this I may possibly be mistaken; but I am certainly right in fearing that the chances are small that you will profit by the fruits of my experience. I shall, however, clear my conscience by doing the best I can for you, and if you don't benefit by it, that is your lookout.

All the members of your mother's family—to me over-devout, although most estimable persons—have concurred in calling me worldly. They objected on that score to my being your godmother in the first place; and your aunt Abby, when I was provoked to plain-speaking perhaps not entirely justifiable, and told her she was a prig, once

informed me that she had always thanked Heaven that you were after the death of your mother so completely removed from my influence. I fear some grain of truth was mixed with their prejudice, and that to assume to offer you moral or spiritual advice on the score that I was one of your sponsors in baptism would be a little presuming. Persons of your age, moreover, are apt to be unconsciously on their guard against the counsel of a godmother if it is of the conventional sort. I have determined, therefore, to be as simply and frankly worldly as possible. I speak as one who has seen a good deal of life, who has enjoyed it most thoroughly, and who wishes to help you to get on in the world as well as I have got on myself.

I, of course, hope that you will be moved to confide in me, and to ask me questions. I shall probably not be able to answer many of them, but I shall be pleased that you trust me enough to let me know what you are thinking about, and you will have the advantage of having tried to put your bothers down in plain words. That in itself is no small thing, for simply to

get a doubt into speech often disposes of it. One of the chief advantages of a husband is to have him to ask questions of when you never for a moment expect an intelligent answer or care whether you get one. It soothes the nerves to force the thing out of your head into the air. Ask me anything you like, and I will at least be nice about it. I will not make fun, and I will give you the best reply I can invent, even if I know it is true and you ought not to be told.

That sounds rather wicked, I'm afraid; but if I am worldly, I am New England to the core and your godmother, so you need not be seriously afraid. All I can ask of you is that you read my letters; and if you do not at the time mind them much, they may some time help you to understand yourself and your own experiences.

Good-night, my dear. I write this to prepare you, and I stop because I have n't the least idea what I am going to tell you now I have made up my mind to be your Lady Chesterfield. But I shall think! Always lovingly, etc.

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P. S. I wish you would tell me about anybody that is of especial interest, — any man, I mean, of course. I shall be so glad to hear.

## II

### A COUNSEL OF GRACE

THE text of my first sermon, my dear, was flaunting itself in my face at the very moment I determined to begin these letters. There in the ballroom the young girls were walking with an uncouthness which would have disgraced wenches born and bred on a cow-farm. The stride of the modern young woman is about the most hideous motion womankind ever evolved. The only caprice of fashion, so far as my knowledge of the matter goes, that could be called worse was a vulgar distortion which had a brief reign, chiefly among the socially doubtful, when your mother and I were girls at school. You may have heard of the "Grecian bend," but if you have ever seen it, you probably think it to have been a mere caricature. The shop-girls thought it the most elegant and distinguished style conceivable. I recall how your dear mother and I, hardly in

our teens, if I remember rightly, practiced it one afternoon when we were supposed to be shut up in the improving society of irregular French verbs. A nun came in unheard and had the benefit of our performances, and although I do not remember exactly what happened, I have vaguely disagreeable remembrances which lead me to believe that we did some sort of tough gymnastics for a fortnight, to "restore us," I think was the phrase, "to the figure the good God had given us." I shudder to think what would have been the punishment if we had walked in the present fashion.

The modern girl has learned — or affects to have learned — on the golf-links a stride which is too long for her anatomy, and which shows painfully how foolish she is to try to imitate the motions of the men. She goes across the drawing-room as if her walk were produced by mechanical means, and were beyond her control. I have seen puppets a hundred times more graceful. I have no manner of doubt you are like the rest of them, and go galumphing along as if you were trying to see how heavily it is possible for you to step. The

girls I know put their feet down as if they were trying to repeat the miracle by which some of the old saints left the imprint of their footsteps in the solid rock. It is simply hideous, and I can only give thanks to Heaven that I never had a daughter. If I had had a daughter who walked like this, I know I should have murdered her, and her ghost would have stumped in my ears until the gallows took me. The modern boy walks badly enough, with an ugly carriage of his arms he gets from running, or imitates from those who run, but he is grace itself compared to the modern girl.

Now, my dear, I know you will resent this, and I know it is likely to produce small impression, except to make you think me old-fashioned and conventional: but consider a little. Even your generation, undoubtedly the cleverest the sun ever shone upon, — every generation is that up to twenty-five! — cannot escape growing older. The price you must pay for living, if you go on indulging in that expensive luxury, is to become first middle-aged, and then — I am in sight of the fact, and I know! — old. You are able at your years to



carry off a certain amount of awkwardness simply by your freshness and briskness. A good-natured friend of mine said the other day, when the gait of the girls was discussed: "Of course it is ugly, but it looks so young and quaint." It is well to remember that what is the quaintness of ugliness at twenty is the ugliness of quaintness at forty!

It is no use to talk to you of how you look now, I'm afraid; but you must remember that the girl who strides so awkwardly is preparing for a middle age without grace and an old age of antique uncouthness. It is simply impossible to go on stramming about as do the buds I see at balls, and to hope to grow into a graceful woman, with an air of refinement and breeding. When a woman has lost the freshness of youth, there are at most but three things which can make her socially tolerable: grace, cleverness, and kindliness; and the last — such is the world in which we live — only wins for her social tolerance. Goodness does not secure forgiveness for social clumsiness. To be able to move well, to walk well, to enter or to leave a room gracefully, counts for much

more than the keeping of all the commandments. It is the whole stock in trade of women I could name, and it is astonishing how well they get on. It is a pleasure to see them move; they have the air of supreme breeding; they appear always at home and at their ease in society, — and nobody would for a moment be able to think of questioning their right to be admitted anywhere. The approval of the social world is generally based on very slight foundations; but since it is equally true that its disapproval may rest on grounds quite as trivial, it is wise to take care about the little things.

Middle age seems to you so far off that you probably wonder why you should be expected to bother about it now; but really it is n't! It is only an hour or two ago that your mother and I thought it would never come! — But I know by experience that it is of no use to urge this; you will never believe. Only I warn you that if when you are young you walk like a camel, you will never win admiration for your carriage when you are older.

You think, I have n't a doubt, that the men like you best if you are modern. I've no doubt

that if you could get them to express an opinion, they would tell you so. But men never know what they really like in women; they never did, and they never, never will! In fact, if they could know, the spell would be broken. The moment that a man truly understands what makes him in love with a girl, the knell of her power is sounded. Men say they like this and they dislike that in girls, and they are entirely in earnest, poor dears. They think they know; and the fact that they like or dislike exactly opposite things in different girls does n't in the least enlighten them. If they comprehend anything about the matter, it is not what they are moved by, but what takes us. They can often tell what will fetch a girl; they often have an instinct to help them, I believe, for they continually do things to please us that they are by no means clever enough to do intentionally. They know or can guess at what will please a woman; but they will not to the end of the world understand what it is that subdues them.

If all the young men that I know made solemn affidavits that they like to see girls stram,

I should still know better. When you see a girl that you have despised for being sloppy, and limp, and gliding, carry off the most eligible man of the season, you remember what I tell you, my dear; and draw the moral!

Not to talk of the men of your generation, however, — though I do know a good many of them, and they talk to me so trustingly that I would n't for the world betray confidences I have sworn to keep, unless breaking my word could do them some good, — I can at least speak with knowledge of my own contemporaries. No man of years of discretion wants his wife to enter a ballroom like a giraffe, and even if the boys of your age are not wise enough to see that this is the normal future for some of the buds of to-day, they will find it out as you all grow older. The men that I grew up with say something of the sort with a good deal of frankness. You no doubt think they are flattering us because we do not stride and try to put our feet through the planks of the floor at every step; I can see now your superior smile. I will not say another word, and the loss is yours!

### III

#### ON LEARNING TO TALK

I AM sorry about my last letter; not for what I said, but for the way I said it. The things I said were true, and I don't in the least take them back; but I got excited, and descended to slang, and that hurts my conscience. I am afraid I'm not fitted to be a godmother, when I can write in a way so uncontrolled to my goddaughter; but when I get to thinking of the modern girl's uncouthness, I lose my temper. It's especially unfortunate that I fell into slang just then, moreover, for I must say something about your conversation, and it seems a little incongruous. Let it all go, my dear; and pretend I did n't say anything Miss Deborah Jenkins — you don't know who she was, of course — would n't approve. We will start over again; only what I said was all true, however I said it.

It is worth your while to work in order to be

clever in talk. No doubt you have a vague notion that conversation comes by the grace of Heaven, but nothing is farther from the truth. You may as well say dancing comes by nature. In a few favored individuals it does, but even they have to work to develop their gifts, and to learn to use them according to the laws of the world. No human being, no matter how good a dancer by nature, could dance a two-step without learning it. Most mortals, moreover, need all the aid they can get from the dancing-master. Some people do talk glibly, and even attractively, by instinct, but even they do not get far without study of one sort or another, without practice, and without taking pains; while most of us are in the same position in regard to talking as to dancing, if we but knew it.

The circle in which a girl moves has a good deal to do with what is required of her. In New York, so far as I could ever see, a woman is not asked to know anything beyond gossip and money and horses. She is expected to be proficient in all the scandal that is within the limits of decency, and is called clever if she

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has the art to make excursions well outside the limit with an air of innocence. A scandal must above all things lose nothing in her telling of it, especially if it concerns people with a great deal of money; and it must be admitted that the New York multi-millionaires, as the newspapers call them, have been most generous in providing the *débutante* of recent years with abundant material upon which to exercise her growing talents. New York buds and belles seem not to be required to have any ideas or interests beyond this sort of talk and making a rich marriage; or if they have, they are expected to conceal the fact. Of course they know about dress, and they dress infinitely better than the girls in Boston; but the talk among the women while the men are smoking after dinner! — If Boston is “a state of mind,” New York is absence of mind.

My dear, I don't know if you know Mrs. Trainor, for of late years she has been a good deal abroad. She was a Baltimore girl long ago, and married one of the Harte Trainors when I was a slip of a bud. She went to New York to live, and she hated it as much as she

loved her husband. She told me once that she had trained herself to sleep whenever she went back to the drawing-room after dinner. She did it deliberately, and declared that she would not be disturbed. "When I was a bride," she said, "I took to it as a means of self-preservation because the vapidity of the talk drove me frantic; and of course they all thought I had some sort of a horrid disease. Then they said it was a trick I had to keep myself looking young. I did n't mind what they said, so long as I did n't have to talk about horses and money." I have seen times, my dear, even in Boston, when I should have been glad to follow her example; while as to a drawing-room in London when we are waiting for the men, — Dante might have added it to his "Inferno" as a circle beyond anything he had imagined!

You may have heard the often repeated saying that no woman can talk well until she is over thirty, but you do not realize that no woman of any age can talk well, if she has not been for a good many years working hard to gain the accomplishment. "This is all very



well," I hear you say, "but how does one learn to talk, except, of course, by talking?" I can tell you some of the ways, if you will take the trouble to try them. A girl will take lessons in golf, and work indefatigably simply to make herself a miserable player of an unlady-like game, just because that is the fad of the moment, and with a full knowledge that when the rage has gone by, after a few seasons, whatever skill she may have will not keep her at it. She will retain then only the ugly golf stride. To force her to take a tenth part as much trouble about the game of conversation, although that can never go out of fashion and will be of importance as long as she has a tongue and can wag it, is all but an impossibility.

Of course the most obvious way to improve in conversation is to talk, — provided one talks as well as one is able. To go into good society and conscientiously to talk as well as possible to all sorts of people, to adapt yourself to moods and character, and to persons of different ages, is the most valuable practice. Make it your business to say what you try to

say so that you shall be easily and quickly understood by any person you address, whether that person is wise or foolish. You cannot, in ordinary society talk, put things too clearly, and hardly too simply. This does n't mean that you are to be a prig or a pedant, that you are to talk like a good little girl in a moral story; but it does mean that you are to do what you attempt as well as you possibly can. When you are put beside a log of wood at dinner, as will sometimes happen in the best regulated of dinner-parties, pride yourself on finding out what he can talk about, and on being able to meet him on his own ground. Any man can talk about something, if he is only a fool who can simply tell you about himself. Nothing will give you a better standing with the boobies than to make them talk, and although this is not much in itself, it is a make-weight to the substantial gain of getting good practice. It is also a way of being entertained when you have a dull partner. If he cannot please you, you may at least please yourself by seeing how you can manage him; — the art may serve you well in serious straits, my

dainty mistress, before you are through with the game of life.

I suppose it is of small use to say anything about reading, for your generation seems to be incapable of reading much beyond skimming novels for plots; but you really may get much valuable help out of Dickens and Thackeray, if you will read them thoroughly. I don't mean in the way of quoting them, for unless you are talking to an elderly man, or a very exceptional young one, to quote would be to be enigmatic, and would simply make you seem pedantic; and as the masculine vanity flies to arms the moment a girl shows anything having the color of mental superiority, that is to be guarded against most carefully.

The reading which would be most to the point, I suppose you will not touch, but I relieve my mind by mentioning it. You should, if you were my real daughter, read, and read, and reread, and re-reread the best dramatists. That is the best school for conversation, and it is one which every girl who would make the most of herself should be trained in. I remember that when I was at school we all

thought Madelaine Drayton the most stupid thing imaginable, and we attributed it largely to the fact that she had to read aloud to her invalid father the old English dramas. She used to complain, although she really, as she has confessed since, got to be fond of a good many of the plays; but after her father was dead and she came into the world, there was n't one of us who could talk so well. The result might not always be so marked, but if a girl amounts to anything, I believe it would always be good.

One thing in regard to reading, however, I must urge, and that is that you learn how to manage your ignorance. If you cannot cover it, make a virtue of necessity, and bring it to light frankly. Years before you were born, in the days when everybody who even pretended to intellectual decency was supposed to know Dickens, Tom Foster said to Kittie Crane, one night at a ball, that a certain skinny old dowager looked like Mrs. Skewton. "Like whom?" said Kittie. She was always a simpleton, and knew as little about "Dombey and Son" as you probably know at this moment.

“Why, Mrs. Skewton,” answered Tom, “Cleopatra, you know.” “Oh,” chirruped Mistress Kittie, bound to seem monstrous wise, “Cleopatra, of course. But I had forgotten,” she was silly enough to add, — perhaps her curiosity got the better of whatever sense she had, — “that Skewton was Cleopatra’s family name. I thought she was just Cleopatra.” You may imagine how the story was told at all the dinners that winter and laughed over at the clubs. Kittie was dubbed Cleopatra, and from that day to this the old set recognize the name. She married a man from St. Louis; no sort of a match, either; but of course no man in her set would have wanted to be congratulated on being engaged to Mrs. Cleopatra Skewton. The men don’t much mind their wives’ being fools; it’s often convenient for the carrying out of their own plans; but they do object to having the fact laughed over. To start in with a girl advertised as stupid takes greater inducements in the way of fascinations and money than poor Kittie had to offer.

For talking yourself you need to know

things moderately well; for listening so that the man will think you know a lot, a very slight smattering will do if it is used with skill. Again and again I have given half an hour to the book of some literary lion I was to meet at dinner, and have, I know, come off with honor. Once I did n't, but then I got the book of another man of the same family name. It was a book on mathematics, and the man I met was an essayist. When I found out my pickle, I told him frankly what I had done, and as I could say with vigor that I could n't make head or tail out of what I had looked at in the book, and as the mathematical author was obnoxious to him, we got on in the end more delightfully than ever. Frankness is a great virtue, — when one is forced to it!

This is an enormously long letter, and I have n't said any of the obvious things, such as that all knowledge helps you, that it is well to keep up with the times, that you must read notices of the popular books so as to talk about them, and all that sort of thing. You must already know something, so those tricks you are acquainted with. If you know anything,

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moreover, you know it is time for this epistle to end.

P. S. The men you write about do not seem to have made much impression upon you. Is n't there anybody more interesting than these sons of rich fathers, who seem to be either colorless or vulgar?

## IV

### A VULGAR SUCCESS

I HAVE N'T any right to be surprised at your letter, and I suppose I have no more right to be disappointed; but the truth is that I am both. I am afraid I expect from you something that can come to anybody only at years you are not yet in sight of, — and perhaps only to those who grew up in an atmosphere rather more severe than anything that exists to-day. You can't be your own grandmother, my dear, or even your ancient and prosy god-mamma; and your remarks were innocent enough, and I am a prim, stiff old thing, and that is the whole of it.

Yes, then, Mrs. Morrelle did have His Grace the Archbishop of Carabas and His Highness the Duke of Jaggert to decorate her dinners; and if the King of Caffre Land should come, dressed only in a piece of twine, she would have him, — if he were sufficiently



advertised in the newspapers to make it worth her while. She does at least a third of the things with which the journals credit her, and she has started the reports of at least half the rest, — and in these days of amazing journalism that is saying a good deal. You wonder how she gets hold of all the celebrities; well, I can tell you something about that: but in the meanwhile I do not like the faint suggestion of envy which I find, or fancy I find, in the way you speak of her. You almost seem to envy Mrs. Morrelle her newspaper notoriety. Do you really?

Any social success has to be paid for, and a still higher price is needed to buy social notoriety. As for Mrs. Morrelle, — yes, you do hear of her being everywhere, and entertaining everybody with a big name. She is always to the front; her name is in every newspaper; she is advertised almost as well as a patent medicine; she is the typical example of the woman who finds a deep satisfaction in figuring in the “fashionable intelligence” columns of the Sunday newspapers for your cook and your maid to gossip over. Of all the means of

gratifying a contemptible vanity, this appeals to me least; and it does seem to me to be about as vulgar as anything that mankind ever devised.

New York has accepted Mrs. Morrelle so long, it has so talked about her, rushed to her house, condemned her ways, and been quivering-ly anxious not to lose any chance of being amused by her, that I am of course in the minority in feeling that her social success is a pretty severe reflection on society itself; but let me answer your question how she does it, and then you may judge for yourself.

You know London well enough to know the streets off Piccadilly, and how Americans take lodgings there. Years ago, before Mrs. Morrelle had "arrived," I had an apartment in the same house with her in Clarges Street. I could not help seeing a good deal, and Katherine Ellis was staying just across the way. Katherine told me a good deal that I could n't help listening to, even if I had wished to shut my ears, — which I did n't! Mrs. Morrelle hired a poor old decrepit Lady Flanbourough to take her about, to present her, and all the

rest of it. She did not get on very well at first, even though she spent a lot of money, and before the season was far advanced she made a move to more gorgeous quarters, and depended on herself rather than on weak-kneed Lady Flanbrough. London was at once scandalized and bewildered by her sublime impudence, and ended by admiring her complete intrepidity. She was said to go absolutely without any invitation to big crushes. Once she presented herself at a ball given by the Duchess of Kent. The Duchess had heard of the pushing American, and had declared that she would snub her, if she ever intruded on her domain; but the Duchess had a pet charity, — the lace-makers of Ireland, or something of the sort, — and on the morning of the day of the ball, Mrs. Morrelle sent her a check for £100 for this charity. The check was sent by a special messenger, with a personal note; and when Mrs. Morrelle came sailing up to the hostess that night, absolutely self-possessed, and utterly ignoring the fact that every woman there knew she had not been invited, that she had tried to get a card and

had failed, and that the Duchess had vowed to snub her, — well, the Duchess, who prided herself on being equal to any emergency, simply succumbed. She said afterward to a friend of mine that to snub the American would mean to return that £100, and her conscience would n't allow her to do that. If such an excuse comforted her, she was wise to take advantage of it; but the fact remained that both the "Morning Chronicle" and the "Court Journal" had the name and the gown of Mrs. Morrelle in the account of the Duchess' ball.

The whole social career of Mrs. Morrelle has been along the same lines. The story is that to Emerson, when he visited Egypt, the Great Sphinx said: "You're another!" To Mrs. Morrelle she might truthfully remark: "You excel me in cheek!" Sturdivant Van Wyck once so far departed from his patrician calm as to declare that she "had more sand than Sahara and more brass than a pair of cymbals;" — which shows that the best of us may get slangy and horrid when we discuss this sort of a woman. It is n't even possible to

talk of her without falling into a tone that is rather low.

The harm that women like Mrs. Morrelle do in lowering the social tone is simply incalculable. Why, you, my goddaughter, with all your social traditions,—you write to me as if you were not without a secret envy of her success! Think, then, what is likely to be the effect on girls that are struggling to get on in society,—the many girls that have never been granddaughters, and are bending every nerve to the desperate attempt to achieve a position which will make it possible for them to be grandmothers. So much depends upon the influences they come under; and American society is so completely without acknowledged leaders that when they see Mrs. Morrelle succeeding, when her name is the most prominent in all society notes, of course the result is demoralizing. They have no real standards to try her by, and they regard her career as most brilliant;—and so the evil goes on.

For you it will be sufficient, I am sure, for me to tell you a few of the tales about Mrs.

Morrelle that I know to be true. It is a good deal like gossip, but the occasion warrants it. If the methods of the woman do not sicken you, you may advertise in the yellow journals for a new godmother! You will see what I mean by the price she pays, and I am sure you'll not think the game worth the candle. Mrs. Van Vecten is one of the few conservatives in New York who have always refused to know Mrs. Morrelle. Mrs. Morrelle has left whole packs of cards on the old lady, and never received the slightest acknowledgment; but she has still taken pains to mention when she has been to call on "dear old Madame Van Vecten," as if she were the closest friend of the family. When the granddaughter, Emily Nixon, was to come out, all New York was talking of the ball her grandmother was to give her. The Nixons were to come on from Baltimore, where they live, and Emily was to be presented first to the friends of her mother's family. Mrs. Morrelle of course hastened to leave cards as usual, and with the usual result. This was the one ball in New York that winter that really meant something

socially besides money, and when the invitations went out and Mrs. Morrelle had none, she set her wits to work to achieve one. Emily was to be in New York only a week, and Mrs. Morrelle, who hardly knew Mrs. Nixon by sight, telegraphed to know what evening she could give a dinner for her daughter. The reply was that Miss Nixon had no free evening. Again Mrs. Morrelle telegraphed to know what day she might give a luncheon for "dear Emily." Same result. Still she persevered, and telegraphed for an afternoon on which to have a tea in honor of the *débutante*. When she got a refusal to this, she could probably think of nothing more. She sat down, and waited for her reward in the shape of an invitation. Mrs. Van Vecten, however, is a firm old body, and no invitation came. Mrs. Morrelle showed Mrs. Nixon's telegrams, so that her friends knew of her offers of hospitality; and then in some way — how, Heaven only knows! — she managed to meet Mrs. Nixon in the station on her arrival in New York, quite as if by accident. In the course of their hurried exchange of courtesies

Mrs. Nixon, who assumed that after her account of the telegrams her mother must have sent an invitation, said that she supposed that she should see Mrs. Morrelle at the ball. That was sufficient. She did see Mrs. Morrelle at the ball, and a most careful description of the gown and the jewels worn by Mrs. Morrelle on that occasion was in every paper in New York. That is the way she does it.

When the Russian Princess Kachtzoff-Morowovitch came over, heralded, of course, by abundant notices in the journals, she found at her hotel a most magnificent basket of roses, — bushels of them, you understand, — with the card of Mrs. Victor Morrelle. She asked of the clerk who Mrs. Victor Morrelle might be. He probably reckons social greatness by newspaper reports, and represented the lady as the very top and pinnacle of American fashion. So the Princess had her secretary send a formal card of thanks. That was enough. Mrs. Morrelle called. The Princess was out. Mrs. Morrelle sent at once an invitation to a dinner, on the ground that some of the most distinguished men and women in the



city wished the honor of meeting the Princess; and then she invited the distinguished people, on the ground that the Princess desired to meet them. Some of them accepted and some declined; but the Princess was there, the names of all the guests were in the papers, — and thus more glory and social acclaim for the enterprising Mrs. Morrelle.

She does not always succeed. I have known her to have some of the most appalling snubs that have ever fallen to the lot of social pirates; but that is part of the risk, and I will say she takes it pluckily. Some of the men say she has the hide of a rhinoceros, and perhaps she has; but she secures in one way or another pretty much everything and everybody she wants. If she does n't, she gets credit for it. It is said — but this may or may not be true — that she gives out to the papers the lists of the persons she invites. If they do not come after that, it is their loss, and not any diminution of her great glory!

Now, my dear, I could give you other instances of the way in which a woman of this type keeps herself in evidence and produces

the appearance of having the world at her feet. The question is, whether you think such a success is worth the price. It is manifestly foolish and unjust to envy Mrs. Morrelle or any other woman for a triumph you would scorn. You keep your self-respect, and she has her name constantly in the papers. Perhaps I am too old-fashioned to appreciate the bliss of figuring in the society columns, for I was brought up to consider publicity rather vulgar. In the last days of my dear old father's life, when society reporting was just coming in, a woman reporter came to the house to ask about some party or other of which word had got to her somehow. Mother was flustered, and declared that she would not see the creature, as she put it, and father offered to go down in her place. He began the conversation without giving the reporter much chance, and asked where he had had the honor of meeting her. She was confused, and explained at once that she had never had that pleasure, but that she had been sent by the paper she represented, that it was merely part of her day's work. Father — you never knew father, and can't

imagine what a courtly, old-school gentleman he was — wondered if there were not some mistake, since he had not asked the paper to send any one to his house, and he was sure no editor would take it upon himself to do anything of the sort unasked. “Will you please thank the editor most kindly,” he went on, “for having taken all this trouble; but I have nothing whatever to communicate, and if you will allow me, I will have a carriage called to take you back to the office.” She protested, and of course attempted to urge her errand; but he affected to suppose she was only reluctant to receive a favor, and assured her that since she had taken the trouble to come to render him a service, he should be most unhappy if he were not allowed to do at least this. A carriage was called, father put the bewildered reporter into it with as much courtesy as if she had been a duchess, and away she went, exactly as wise as she had come. To-day a reporter would very likely have described what she had seen of the house, and made up an account of the dinner, or whatever it was; but at that time enterprise had not gone

so far, and we had our entertainment unreported.

Of course you can see that I am not up to date, and hardly know how a girl feels who really wants her frock and her attractions catalogued by the press; but at least I have shown you how you can lead, if you care to pay the price. If you want to be a second Mrs. Morrelle, you have only to marry a millionaire and lay aside all foolish delicacy. Force your way in where you cannot get in on other terms, and send the reporters accounts of your gowns, your goings and comings, your guests, and whatever else is none of the business of the public. Then, as you are much younger, a great deal better born, and a hundred times as pretty as Mrs. Morrelle, you will have her consumed with a real envy, beside which that your letter shows will be the palest of all pale shadows! — Only, if you do, you had better get another godmother!

## V

### ON CHARITY GONE WRONG

I AM glad, my dear goddaughter, that you take my letters so good-naturedly, although it is evident between the lines of your answers that you cannot help regarding me as all but antediluvian in my ideas. You have been kindly willing to let me exploit my absurd theories, and not felt that any possible blame could attach to you. Now that you have asked me a question, and so given me a text, however, you are in a manner responsible for what may follow in reply; but I am so willing to take all the burden on my own shoulders, indeed, I am so conscious of the virtuous wisdom of what I have written, that I would n't share the honor with anybody in the world!

I am more pleased than I can tell you that you care to ask my advice about going into charitable work, for even if you do not follow it, the question at least shows that you have in

your secret heart some sensible if faint doubt.

I am only afraid lest I should become more extravagant in my answer than I was about the hulking gait of the modern girl. My ideas on this subject will seem to you not only more aged and more antiquated than would a mouldy biscuit left over from Noah's ark, but I fear lest you think also that I am as stony-hearted as the Great Sphinx with her bosom of granite, or whatever sort of stone she is made of. Most of all will you regard me as worldly, for the innumerable idiocies which are to-day committed in the name of Philanthropy are generally given a sort of varnish of piety. It is customary to stick on modern charity work a label of religion, just as a union label is put on modern goods.

For mercy's sake, don't think I am flippant, or that I fail to appreciate the nobility of real charity. You cannot have too high a reverence for noble and self-denying work for humanity, and you can hardly make too great sacrifices to aid it; 'only do have also reverence enough to keep your foolish little inexperienced fingers out of it. For the sake of the good that needs

to be done, and, on a lower plane, for your own good, keep out of slumming, and charity-visiting, and the rest of those immoral dissipations wherewith the modern girl diversifies her life.

At a dinner last week which I matronized, the dearest, sweetest, prettiest, most honest girl I know, the *débutante* that I like best, told me of an experience she had recently. She has charge, or part charge, — her people mean well, but they spoil her, — of a club of working-girls in some unholy purlieu of the town, and the night before she had been overseeing a dancing-class. She was driving home after it was over, — it was about ten o'clock, I believe, — when she saw a couple of her pupils, who had started to walk home, talking on the corner of the street to a man. The place was one where no decent girl of her class had any business to be, certainly a part of the city where no daughter of mine should be at that time of night, but my dear little girl stopped her carriage, took the two girls away from the man, lambkins saved from a wolf, and drove them home. She said she could n't have them

talking to men on the street corners, and that she felt personally responsible for their getting home safe from her dancing-class.

I actually groaned, my dear, at the hopelessness of the situation. I told her that she had been impertinent, and that she had no more right to interfere with the chat of those girls than they had to send her home if they saw her speak to a man on the street; that I was thoroughly ashamed of her for thinking evil of those girls because they were following a custom of their social world; that she did not in the least know good from bad. The result was that she asked me, with the air of an unsophisticated seraph, if I did n't think it was dreadful for girls to be exposed to such temptations. "I think it is dreadful they should be exposed to you!" I said. "Because I stopped and took them home?" asked she. I said that was only a piece of childish silliness, but what troubled me was that she should have thought harm of their speaking to a man. She looked first puzzled and then offended. "I'm not a baby!" she told me. She looked so pretty and so dear that I could have



kissed her, and I instantly reflected that the modern girl prides herself upon being as the gods and knowing good from evil, and in the second place that she does not in the least know anything — really know — about the sins she feels knowingly bound to be shocked about. If the young girls knew as much about the wickedness of the world as they think they do, they would be moral monsters. They play with ideas of sin as a small boy plays with fire, not in the least conscious of the danger that lies in the sparks he whirls to make bright lines in the air.

I knew that it was of no use to reason with my dear, self-willed, innocent friend, but I did have a pretty serious talk with her mother over the matter; and Mistress Sylvia at least gives no more dancing-lessons in disreputable corners of the city.

You must by this time begin to suspect that I do not enthusiastically approve of much that in these days is called charity work. It has been invented by self-conscious mortals who are overweighted with a sense of their importance in the management of the universe,

and has been taken up as a fad by fashionable women who like to pose as mightily pious and self-denying when in truth they are only amusing themselves. It is of no use to any live mortal; it does harm to the young ladies who with pathetic sincerity or with fatuous vanity suppose themselves to be doing amazing things for the regeneration of society; and, what is of far more consequence, it does a lot of harm to the unfortunate girls of the lower classes who ought to be helped or let alone.

The more kindness and humanity a girl has, the nobler woman she will make; but the more common sense is mixed with it, the less danger there is that she will make her very humanity a power for harm instead of good. Besides that, I do think you young folk should cultivate some show of humility, if you have n't any of the genuine article. The problem of philanthropic work is an extremely difficult one. No woman who is not clear-headed, sensible, kind, and of deep experience, is to be trusted with philanthropic work among the working-girls. I know of Girls' Friendly Societies that are doing a wonderful amount

of good, — there is a fine one in Washington, — but it is where young society girls are not allowed to come muddling and fussing. The way in which you children have no hesitation in messing with the souls of poor creatures, just as you made mud pies in your childhood, simply makes me shiver.

The unconscious insolence of much modern charity work is enough to make angels weep! You assume that, in virtue of your birth in a certain social sphere, your money, and your education, — which is on the whole likely to be of not more than a tenth the value of that the girl you patronize has got from a common school and the hardships of life, — you are at liberty to intrude upon the private existence of a stranger. You assume, moreover, that she should be grateful for your intolerable impertinence. My dear goddaughter, what do you know about the life of a working-girl, of her thoughts, her feelings, her aspirations, her ambitions, and all that makes up her world? You have no common language, except in tragic situations, and hardly then. If you found her weeping over the dead body of

mother or sister, you would as a human creature be able to some extent to understand her grief. Even then, how could you appreciate her matter-of-fact acceptance that the death of one dear to her could not be allowed to interfere with her earning her day's wage! You would either wonder at her callousness, or you would have an exaggerated horror of the situation, and in either case you would inevitably be measuring by your own standards, not by hers. What would seem to her the common-places of her lot in life would be to you the elements of tragedy, and you could hardly fail to show her that you felt this. The result, so far as there was any, would simply be to increase her pain for no good; to give her a sensitiveness by which she could gain nothing but fresh capacity to be hurt. You belong to one world, she to another. The talk about equality is beautiful, and I have heard it so affectingly put that I have — I was younger! — wept great salt tears not only into fresh handkerchiefs with point lace borders, but on to fresh ribbons that spotted with every drop. Now that I have attained to years of discretion

I stick to my prayer-book, and pray that I and all mankind may be happy and useful in that station of life to which it has pleased God to call us.

It is your business to fill the station in life to which you have been called. You will find abundant exercise for your charity at present in being patient with your maid, in showing consideration for the members of your family, above all in winning the confidence of that brother of yours, in going without superfluous luxuries so as to have something to give to those who know how to spend it wisely for the benefit of the poor. For the love of heaven, keep out of the slums, and if you have anything to do with clubs and so on for working-girls, put yourself with humility under the absolute direction of some wise elderly woman. You have no business to be interfering with the life of those in another station until you have had experience so wide as to make you able to judge in a way sympathetic and imaginative, and above all, mature. Do not attempt through vanity or through sentimentality offices for which you are not fitted, or

justify your inefficiency by profaning the name of charity.

I wish every young girl who unadvisedly plunges into philanthropic work might be met by an angel with a flaming sword with "Charity begins at Home" inscribed on it. This is a frightfully solemn discourse, but I feel tremendously on the whole subject. I know how antiquated and narrow a modern girl considers the idea of confining her efforts to home work; and you doubtless are thinking that many girls have nothing to do at home. To which I answer with all the emphasis I can put into it, — see, I'll even resort to under-scoring, that abominable trick of hysterical school-girls! — **THE GIRL WHO CAN FIND NO CHARITY WORK AT HOME IS UTTERLY, ABSOLUTELY, HOPELESSLY UNFIT TO ATTEMPT IT ANYWHERE ELSE!** Young society girls have no more business doing charity work in the slums than they have serving tea on a battlefield, and the sooner they find this out, the better both for them and for the slums.

I have probably said twice too much, yet I feel as if I had not said half enough. I can

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only close with an emphatic AMEN, or SELAH, or whatever word will best serve to show that I am entirely in earnest, and that it will be better for you if you follow the advice of your sensible, however worldly, old godmother.

## VI

### THE DAILY ROUND

HA, my lady, have I caught you? You ask how you are to occupy your time if you do not go into charity work. You dear, foolish goose, don't you see how that betrays your whole attitude toward your amateur philanthropy? Naturally, I knew well enough that when you girls take up that sort of thing it is really for the fun of it, — *pour passer le temps* ; but I did not expect to lead you so easily to a practical acknowledgment of the fact. I spare you a pretty severe homily that might be preached on the impertinence of regarding the poor as the playthings of your leisure hours; for while perhaps you have no right to forget to consider them, I understand how completely it is through thoughtlessness you sin. I let all that go, in order to tell you what I think you might do with your time.

You seem to think I am trying to make you



stay primly and dully at home, and, as you say, "wear a backboard and work samplers, as our grandmothers did." I refuse to allow that even so drastic measures might not produce good results; they did in the case of our grandmothers, and the material to-day cannot be so very much worse. I am not foolish enough to suppose, however, that even if I wished for such a life for you, — which I do not, — the wish would be realized. The conditions to-day are entirely different, and one has always to reckon with environment as much as with individuals. You are not to be taken simply as a human being, but as part of your generation and of your social world. Any advice which leaves this out of account is sure to be useless and idle.

I should like to see you in a backboard working a sampler! I am not sure that the two are possible together, but they may be, and it would be good for you to have all the Spartan training that could be put on you at once. Only, no girl to-day would for a minute submit to the conditions under which our grandmothers lived. Whether she would be happier

if she did is one of those points about which it is easy to argue forever without getting anywhere. The fact remains. Your generation has been brought up in an atmosphere of excitement. You personally have probably seen in one way or another more variety and stimulating things than came into the whole lives of those dear, prim women who smile at you so serenely from the family portraits. The gravity that Copley and Stuart painted is something which would be utterly impossible in your day. You have to order your life in a world that stirs, and froths, and foams, and all the rest of the things that are restless and disquieting; and you complain that I try to induce you to avoid that so-called philanthropy which your companions find a convenient resource.

The subject is not a simple one. In the old, old days when the mistress of the house was expected to work in the still-room, and distill perfumes, and flavors, and cordials; when she was responsible for the giving out of supplies; when she was half physician and half a lot of things besides, time cannot have been heavy on her hands. I sometimes wonder if we

women, at least, however it may be with the men, would n't be happier if we were back in the old times. We are not, however; and to-day much that formerly devolved on the mistress is entirely taken care of by the servants. More than one of my friends have complained to me that it was practically impossible to find any regular domestic task which could appropriately and effectually be given over to a daughter of the house. A Philadelphia friend, of good old Quaker stock and large wealth, determined that her only daughter should have some household work to do. She meant to make it regular, not too light, and of real importance; so she set Edith to take care of the lamps. She was forced to give it up because Edith, good girl as she really is, belongs to a generation too independent and too clever not to find a way to escape from an uncomfortable service. The story the mother told of her struggles to enforce discipline was most amusing, although it had, too, its pathetic side. A modern girl with cleverness, money to bribe the servants, and the determination to have her own way, sure of the sympathy of her

own kind to sustain her in any crisis, is altogether a different creature from her grandmothers, and is not easily to be coerced.

Not all domestic service, fortunately, is so disagreeable as taking care of the lamps, and I believe every girl should have some one thing which is intimately connected with the family life and household comfort, for which she makes herself personally responsible. It need not be burdensome, but it should be regular and constant. Dust the drawing-room, or be responsible for the flowers, if you will undertake nothing more weighty; only have something that is to be attended to every day, and let it be something real, practical, and homely. Personally, I have a fancy for having such a service connected either with the table or with the open fire; but whatever it is, remember to take the responsibility for it yourself. I am not advising you to do the thing now and then, always sure that a servant will see to it if you forget. Do it yourself, or have it left undone to reproach you in the eyes of the household, and thus give you a vigorous call back to duty.

You are not, I hope, stupid enough to give

up study because you have left school; and you should have some class to prepare for and to attend. I never made out to do much studying by myself, and I do not greatly believe in it. You cannot do too much to keep up your languages; and besides that, you cannot be my goddaughter unless you really read, and take time to read things that are worth while.

You must or should go to gymnasium. Perhaps you cannot in the rush of the first winter you are out; but go back to it, and give real attention to walking and riding. A good horsewoman never looks better than in the saddle, as has been said over and over; and it is the duty of every woman to do those things in the doing of which she looks her best. The moral good of the world, you know, depends largely on the presentation to the eyes of men of beauty under all possible circumstances; and, by the same token, it is the moral duty of every woman to preserve her figure — for the æsthetic uplifting of the world.

When to the things I have mentioned are added the social duties which belong to modern life, — I begin to feel like a tract, and

shall for days be haunted by the fear of being distributed by some dreadful woman in cotton gloves and an unspeakable bonnet! — time should not hang heavy on your hands. You have calls to make, dressmakers to confer with, a calling-list to keep in order, and all the rest of it. The modern dressmaker alone, with her way of fitting, will take up about all the time you can spare, for this winter at least. If all these things are done well, you will not supply any great temptation to the enemy of mankind whose business it is to find mischief for idle hands to do.

By this time I have no doubt you have on your lips the puckering smile of self-conscious righteousness. You say to yourself that I am indeed the most worldly of women; and that in your charity work you professed to do something for others, while I have laid out a programme given up entirely to self. Not so fast, my bonny mistress! In the first place, much that I have advised affects the comfort and well-being of others; in the second place, I am not yet at the end of my list. I have still to speak of your charity work. You must have

something directly unselfish in your life, or your existence will be as savorless — even in time as unsavory — as food without salt. To do something for others is after all to do the best for ourselves. No amount of tiresome reiteration of that fact by those who make virtue unattractive has been able to render it untrue. To be self-absorbed is to be unhappy.

What are you to do, then? Not poke your pretty, little, impertinent nose into the private affairs of families born poor and socially inferior; and not undertake to arrange the progress of social evolution according to the views of a committee of fussy women. You are to call upon the sick and the dull in your own circle; you are to do the unpleasant social drudgery of your own world. If you really wish to sacrifice your own pleasure for the good of others, here is your way. There are enough unpleasant things which need to be done in this line to afford ample scope for all the philanthropic zeal you are likely to muster.

I told you in the first line of this epistle how much faith I have in any philanthropy behind your desire for slumming. I have become so

moral in the course of this sermon that I am almost ashamed to make a practical application; and yet I must. If you wish to prove the sincerity of your desire to be charitable, go and see old Mrs. Meagre, bedridden, bitter, censorious, but pathetically eager for news of the social world which was the only thing she ever really cared for. Her mother and your grandmother were bosom friends, and that is excuse enough for you. The wretched old creature will be disagreeable to you, and very likely hint that she suspects you of having an eye to being remembered in her will; she is sure to attack anybody she suspects you of caring for: but you will give a miserable invalid a little relief from the frightful monotony of weary days. You come away from a tenement house brightened by the interest of a gratified curiosity and glowing with self-deceiving approval. You leave behind, in most cases, envy and discontent. You will depart from Mrs. Meagre's so low in your mind as to be all but ready to take chilled aconite; but the reaction will be wholesome, and at any rate you will leave a raddled old woman less



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wretched for your visit, and apprehending, under all her snarling, your kindness. She will never let you see it, but she will really be grateful; and if she were not, you will have done your best.

You can easily fill out the list of those to whom you can sacrifice yourself if you will, and may make your days brim with blessed usefulness and kindness. — My dear goddaughter, I am so affected and edified at and by my own seriousness that I shall proceed at once to array myself and go to call on Miss Pennington, who is housed with a cold, and into whom, when she is under the weather, enter as many evil spirits as went out of the woman in the Bible, — seven legions, or ten, or whatever it was. I merely add in closing that any stray minutes that are left over by my programme, and seem to be good for nothing else, may be bestowed on the men. I have reason, however, to feel that this statement is hardly necessary, as I am informed that you were walking in the park Sunday with a very handsome man, described by my correspondent as looking “like a genuine thoroughbred.”

## VII

### COUNSEL CONCERNING ORDERS

OH, yes; what you say about clubs is true enough as far as it goes. They are pretty much all alike, and they are not entertaining when one has a chance at real things. You had better join the Grenville, so as to make a convenience of the clubhouse; but after all, the real reason for joining any of the women's clubs is, to my mind, so as not to seem too odd and stand-offish. I keep up my membership at the Pocahontas because I like to have a place to go to in town if I have to come up in summer when the house is n't open; but I think I should pay the fees anyway, just to do as other women do. It is not wise to be too independent; and after all, one wants to help support a thing the women of one's set have started. It never would do to stand by and see it fail for want of support.

A woman's club is of course a bore. I never

could make out just why it should be, for the men are fond of their clubs, and we never really are, no matter how we pretend. I insist with my husband that it is because men are so self-satisfied that they are always pleased with themselves; but I suspect the truth is that the women never have a really good time unless there are men in it. Curry Swift says the difference comes from the men's smoking at their clubs, but of course that is sheer nonsense. At any rate, smoke would never satisfy us.

When the Pocahontas was formed, I asked Sherman if I should join, and he advised that I should. He said it would be stupid if I looked at it as a recreation, but would be useful as a convenience. He said with a good deal of frankness that the women could n't have a club of the sort men had, and when I tried to make him say why not, all I could get out of him was that the club was a masculine institution, and that women could n't have a club in the masculine sense any more than men could have a sewing-circle. Of course he was right; he generally is. I tell him that infallibility is his worst fault, and that if I were not

very much in love with him, I should hate him for it. — This flatters him, you see; and it is as necessary to flatter husbands now and then as it is to give sheep salt or cats catnip. Besides, I mean it, for it is a good deal of a trial to have a husband that has such a dreadful habit of being right! Only Sherman never boasts of it afterward. If he did, fond as I am of him, I should long ago have murdered him in the chilliest of cold blood!

I have found the Pocahontas a great convenience sometimes, but I should as soon think of reading the dictionary for excitement as of going to the club for amusement:—although, now I think of it, I have been a good deal amused by things that happen there in the way of women's making fools of themselves.

As for the orders, or societies, or whatever they are, — well, I do think they are rather silly. They seem to me like an imitation of the societies men have, and I always considered those foolish. Mrs. Candace Scott tried for two years to get me to join the Colonial Dames, and was furious because I would n't. She said I evidently did n't think they were good

enough for me; and then she took the other tack, and said in company that I must regret not having any ancestors who would make me eligible. Was n't she a fool? I smiled at her with all the sweetness of a honey-pot, and answered that as I knew she had had my pedigree looked up, there seemed to be nothing for me to say. The point of it was that she kept a professional genealogist at work for a year, trying to graft her mother's family on to our tree somehow, because there was some similarity of names, and he could not make it work. She knew that I knew all about it, because he had come to me for information; and she turned so red that I was afraid of apoplexy. These women are so silly! They get up a society to advertise that they are by birth superior to all the rest of the world; and then, after all, they are so doubtful about it that if anybody of decent family does n't care to join, they feel all their pretensions discredited! I did not mean to reflect on the families of any of them, but I am not interested in the society, and I don't feel the need of advertising the fact that I had ancestors. Sherman says my

family was good enough for me to feel perfectly at ease in being democratic, and that is about the truth of it.

There are so many orders, too: the daughters of this, and the granddaughters of that, the descendants of the other, and the dames of something else. A woman must be a fool or a foundling not to be able to establish a claim to some of them. I suppose they are no harm, but they certainly do not appeal to me. I have so many other ways of amusing myself that please me more, that I perhaps hardly do justice to the women who find them entertaining, — or try to think they do, poor things! Sherman says the abundance of societies is the result of the fact that the home has gone out of fashion; I ask him if he has n't a home, and he says I do not belong to any of the orders. Certainly women are constantly flocking together nowadays, in a sort of forlorn fashion, like birds whose nests have been torn down.

I have n't the feeling that my husband has about the snobbishness of the orders. He declares that he is tempted to found an order of Sons of the Farmers of the Revolution, just to

show that somebody is not ashamed of having come from the stock that furnished the energy for this country. I tell him that is a noble sentiment for one whose great-great-grandfather on one side was on General Washington's staff, and on the other a noted Oxford man. He says the principle is the same. That does n't mean anything to me; but when my husband says a thing I cannot understand, I assume that it makes for domestic peace if I instantly allow that he is right.

I should not, if I were you, bother with any of the orders or societies, or that sort of thing. You have no time, no need, no interest, I am sure, in it all, and I hope you have no sympathy with advertising your pretensions to good blood. There is no great harm in it, as I said; but why should you?

One order seems to me a trifle more snobbish than all the rest put together, and that is the Descendants of Royal Families. I think it more than likely that I have no claim to belong to it, and that may seem to be the root of my feeling, though I have never had the matter looked up. Of course the royal blood

in the veins of a good many of the members is purely imaginary, and in other cases has to be traced through all sorts of muddy channels. Whether this is so or not, however, such an order in a republic seems to me nothing more nor less than pure caddishness. I was brought up in the old-fashioned way, and although I can scold about this country as well as anybody, and although when I am coming through the custom-house on my way home from abroad I could pull the foundations out from under the whole government with the keenest joy, I am really a loyal American. If there is royal or aristocratic blood in my veins, I should be a fool if I had n't a sense of satisfaction. It may not be the highest sort of position to take, but I should be glad of it. As an American, however, I am not going to forget that my forbears fought for a democratic form of government; and I am not one of those to flaunt the dregs of some old royal family in the face of my countrymen by way of making them discontented with having been born without such remote claims to consideration. Of course the only real fun of



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advertising one's lineage is to make other folk discontented; and it does not seem to me in good taste to do that in this country by glorying in the lees of royal blood.

This is even more of a sermon than I have inflicted upon you before! I am sorry. I will not promise not to do it again, but I will try to restrain my too didactic and dictatorial pen!

I still have hope that the time will come when you will write to me frankly. I am interested in what you say, but what you do is what I really care about. When you write about charity and ask my opinion about joining a club, I am glad to answer you, but I know that these are only surface questions. You need not be afraid of me; but I suppose I shall have to leave you to find that out for yourself. I cannot force you to a confidence that, to be healthy, must be of slow growth. So write in your own way, my dear, and be sure I am really and deeply fond of you, whatever you do.

Only I am a woman, and I should so like to know —!

## VIII

### A COUNSEL OF CUNNING

OF course, my dear, there are girls who make you jealous. I am sorry we are made that way, for the more we are fretted, the better chance we give to the hateful thing to tease us and to put us at a disadvantage. It is maddening how some girls will go on, taking what does n't belong to them. A girl who has any sense of honor will not try to attract a man away from another unless he is a real prize, and then she would be more than human if she did n't try her power. A man with millions is outside all rules, I suppose, and considerations of honor do not seem to count.

All this, however, you know well enough already; the question is what you are to do when you are bothered by the fact that he shows an inclination to allow himself to be chained to the chariot-wheels of another. In the first place, and in the second place, and in

all the number of places that you can count, I beseech you not to show that you care! The very most stupid thing in relation to a man that any woman can possibly do under any circumstances is to let him know that she is piqued or hurt by his neglect or by his slights. Just as long as he thinks her indifferent, she has a hold on him. He is caught by a hook in his vanity, and as that is the toughest part of masculine humanity, it holds longest and most surely. If he slight you, neglect you, jilt you even, smile if it kills you. Make him think it is to you a matter of no consequence, and he will come back if he can get back. If he cannot, you have at least avenged yourself. All his days he will feel that leaving you and losing you was the greatest and most lamentable mistake of his life.

I am not much of a psychologist, but I do know something about men. I have observed that men — men of decency, I mean — generally go through an absurd process of justifying themselves for leaving a girl. They always assume that the girl is completely bowled over; that her wounded affections are bleed-

ing great streams of red heart's blood; and they get into a corner with a fat cigar and repent. They have no end of enjoyment in repenting. It gives them satisfaction to reflect how killingly irresistible they are; they take the utmost credit for tender-heartedness in the contrition they suppose themselves to feel; and altogether they find it almost worth breaking off with a girl to win this beautiful experience of repentant vanity. If, however, the girl refuses to be or to appear in the least troubled, this whole pretty programme is spoiled. They feel how foolish it is to pity a girl who flaunts her indifference to all the world. It begets in the masculine mind all sorts of doubts, — doubts whether he is after all irresistible, whether he does not perhaps care more for this girl than for the new one, doubts whether he does not look ridiculous as having been himself thrown over: he has to go back to assure himself what is the truth of these things, and to make an impression which shall heal his wounded vanity. THEN you have him at your mercy!

A wise old lady I once knew used to main-

tain that any girl could have her pick of all the men of her acquaintance if she only knew how to hold back and to do it shrewdly. Men — as has been said millions of times without making much difference — have the instinct of the hunter, and they want the glory of bringing down difficult game. It is no honor for a man to show as the spoil of his bow and spear the girl who's so complacent that anybody could have had her for the asking. It is true that some of the dearest and sweetest men in the world are so humble that even masculine vanity cannot bring them to the point of thinking they are good enough for the "rose that all are praising," but she can always reassure them if she wishes. What the majority of men of the world desire in choosing a wife is to be able to strut up and down to be admired as being of the irresistibles who have subdued the most particular and difficult of all the belles. It is necessary to impress upon them the idea that by some strange freak of nature you are a girl who holds herself not only as good as they, but better than they can ever hope to be. It will confuse them a little, but it will impress

them, and that is, after all, the important matter.

You must know from your earliest days at dancing-school that the girls that get taken out most are not those who follow the boys with imploring glances, but those who frankly and saucily snub them. It is the difficulty of getting a favor that makes it valuable, and if you girls could only learn this, it would be better for you. A Southern girl has been visiting here this winter. She is rather pretty, nothing more, and she has pitifully plain clothes. She is n't witty, or especially clever; but she has had everything her own way simply from a certain pretty imperiousness. She gives a dance as a boon, instead of accepting it as one. She allows a man to pick up her fan, or to hold her bouquet, or to take her in to supper, as if she intended a kindness. She is n't condescending; she is simply of the race of women who do not kotow to men, but expect men to bow down to them. The North never had the social art as it was known in the South before the war, and a good deal of the old grace and knowledge still lingers

among the descendants of the Southern families.

To come back, however, to the girl that bothers you, be careful of one thing. If there is a girl you are afraid of, praise her. Be especially particular to praise her to the man; not grossly and stupidly, of course, but generously and frankly. For you must understand that in the first place the man will look on you as having a wonderfully sweet and lovely disposition if you can compliment the other girl; in the second place, he is sure to feel that you have not the reason to be afraid of her power that he supposed, or you would not dare to bring her good points into notice. Unless he is too far gone for it to make any real difference what you do, he will be put instinctively a little on his guard against her fascinations, critically wondering whether he has not overestimated them. You cannot in any case do yourself any harm. The girl will make him aware of her attractions, and you only make them common by praising them. You take away from him the secret satisfaction of supposing himself to have discovered

them, and prevent his thinking of her with pleasure as the source of his cleverness. He is more likely to feel that she has tricked him into thinking she has revealed herself — that true self which a lover fondly dreams of as perceived only by the subtle sympathy of his vision, yet which is evident to the whole world! — to him in some special manner.

It is worth remembering, moreover, that if you make good-natured remarks, they are very quickly forgotten. What you say does not outlive the occasion, and all that remains is the impression you have created of being kindly. If you indulge in bitterness, particularly if it has a foundation in fact, what you say is remembered, quoted, exaggerated, distorted, and in the end does you a hundred times as much harm as it does the other girl. If the man really cares for your rival, he will be indignant with you, and set down what may be the plainest truth to pique. You may be playing into the hands of the other girl by enlisting his sympathies on her side. In any case, the balance is greatly in favor of being kind in your words.



Only be honestly kind. You must know girls who affect to be good-natured, but who, under seeming compliment, veil the most damaging thrusts. They are so foolish as to think they cover their tracks; but you know how completely the reverse is true. Of course the girls see through them, but even men can appreciate the real meaning of this sort of thing. They say among themselves that such a girl is catty; that she tries to hide her claws, but that anybody can see how she loves to scratch. She gets a reputation for ill nature and sharpness ten times as bad as that of the girl who is outspoken to a fault.

The summing up of the whole matter is that you cannot do worse than to say ill of others, especially of those you have any reason to fear. In the event that worst comes to worst, and your rival carries off the prize, consider how much better is your position if you have always spoken in her favor. You have nothing to retract; you have never belittled yourself by affecting to underestimate your enemy; you can still be apparently frank and above-board, and cover any chagrin you may

feel, in a way that is utterly impossible if you have beforehand shown your jealousy. "Of course," you say, "I have always expected it. Have n't I always said what a charming girl she is? I've told him so a hundred times. I claim that I had as much to do with making the match as anybody." The girls will know, my dear, if there is a single regret in your heart. That is not to be helped, because nature gave us that infernal penetration into the real feelings of each other where the men are concerned; but even among themselves they can say very little, for your words are all on your side, and they will respect your art and your pluck. As for the men, — and of course what the men think is what counts, — the men will be fooled completely. That is the important point. You cannot afford to let it get into the heads of the men that you have been passed by, that you have lost a chance you would have taken. They want the girl that others want; and to have the reputation, rightly or wrongly, of having failed in an effort to secure one eligible man has many a time ruined a girl's chances with half a dozen others.

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I have poured out in this letter a perfect spring freshet of wisdom! Indeed, I almost feel that I am becoming a Lord Chesterfield in petticoats, and to pride myself accordingly. Do, I beg of you, turn out a more satisfactory pupil than did that uncouth cub he wrote to!

## IX

### AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH

So you are sure that, if I do not approve of your slumming, I must be glad if you help a good cause by dancing on the stage of a public theatre in sight of anybody who chooses to buy a ticket! Oh, my dear, my dear, has n't your generation any natural sense of propriety or any acquired modesty? I'd rather a hundred times you missionaried in the slummiest place known to the pryingest philanthropist than that you should exhibit yourself to the public at so much a head! What difference does it make that you are to do it in the name of charity? Do let us preserve some decency, even where philanthropy is concerned. As for delicacy, it seems to have gone completely out of fashion; but have you reflected upon the advisability of avoiding the awkwardness of forcing a comparison of the bodily charms you may possess with the

well-developed and shamelessly exploited attractions of the ballet girls?

Why is it that you cannot see how vulgar it all is? What has come over the modern girl that she thinks modesty and delicacy simply old-fashioned? The truth of the matter is that vanity prompts girls of any generation to do unladylike acts, to put themselves on exhibition, to do bold things to attract attention; but now this foolish impulse is not balanced as it used to be by the better sense of good breeding, and the very flimsiest excuse of serving a charity is a good enough pretext for going into any extravagance. As for charity, they care—you care—as much as for the length of Pharaoh's beard. What a girl wants who does this sort of thing is to exhibit herself, to win applause, to gratify her vanity. Girls will spend on the dress for a charity entertainment twenty times the money they would subscribe for the cause. To show their figures in an unconventional dress to a gaping public, to move men of coarse taste to noisy admiration, to get the cheap praise of acquaintances who mean about one word in a thou-

sand of what they say, is what the girls covet. They of course like the fun of the excitement, the sense of being "in it," the jollity of rehearsals, and they are able by the name of charity to add the pleasure of hypocritically persuading themselves that they are making sacrifices for the good of others. It is utterly disgusting!

I am not an old maid, and I agree with what I know you think, that a girl might as well be a nun as to be shut out of the fun and to have no excitement. It is all a question where you draw the line. Amateur theatricals are great sport — for those who are in them; and in some ways they are not a bad social training. I like you to play, if it is with good company and under proper conditions. It is the publicity of these philanthropic shows that I am scolding against. You will on the whole, and in the long run, have a better time in life, I believe, if you discriminate against social distractions which are of doubtful propriety.

It is hard to say just what I feel and just what I mean about this matter without seem-

ing to be either base-minded or a dreadful prude. I am sure I am neither. I have been a married woman a good many years, my dear; I have been so happily married that between my husband and me is a fine frankness of comradeship; and I have been the mother-confessor of a whole troop of college boys. I certainly should know something about the way life presents itself to the masculine mind, especially as I have frankly admitted to myself ever since I was able to reason that whether Pope is right about the proper study of mankind or not, the proper study of womankind is certainly man. I know the male animal, his characteristics, his virtues, and his limitations; and I know how he is affected by the sort of thing I am advising you against.

It is not necessarily vulgar or unwholesome for a man to be pleased by a girl's figure, by her physical good points in limb and shape and feature. A girl is not immodest because she likes to see a fine manly fellow, and she is a prudish humbug if she pretends she is indifferent to make and muscles. It is only natural human nature on either side. As long as a

girl keeps within properly recognized limits of displaying her beauties, there is nothing in the attitude of a gentleman toward her which is not legitimate and wholesome. It is amazing, though, how small a departure from the proprieties will set the masculine mind into a different attitude. A girl has only to overstep the bounds of conventional modesty a very, very little to set the men to thinking of her in a way no decent girl could endure if she realized. When she puts herself in the position of the public actress, the notorious ballet dancer, when she appears on the public boards, no matter how she came there, that very fact provokes a license of thought in the unclean man, and deprives her of the conventional barriers which defend her even in the eyes of the real gentleman.

I hate myself for writing all this, and I could shake you for making it necessary. Now I am in, however, I see nothing for it but to go on to the bitter end. All I shall effect as far as you are concerned is to damage my own reputation, I dare say, and to make you think that I must have known very strange men. I have



known the finest men of my circle, and, for that matter, of my time; but they were men. Of course it would be absurd to imply for a moment that any decent man takes occasion to think unpleasantly of a girl because she has part in a public performance. The difference is something like that between having your kitten play with a ball of white worsted in your lap and on the floor. If she knock it about on your lap, she does it no harm, but the slightest rolling of it on the floor smuts it.

I cannot help feeling that any girl who dances on a public stage is sure in some degree to lower herself in the eyes of the men whose opinions are best worth considering; and I am not sure that ushering in a public theatre is not worse. The fast men, the men whose names are likely sooner or later to figure in the divorce court, are generally pleased to have girls they know, even to have their wives, if they are married, brought forward in any sort of publicity. It is in keeping with their vulgar ideas of life and their general scheme of living. The decent men, as I know them, do not like it. I know of fathers who allow their daughters

to go into it through sheer inability to help themselves; but I have seldom found a gentleman who would not cringe a little at the idea. I have noticed, too, that the more sensitive boys, who thought it great fun for other girls to do things of this sort, were not at all reconciled that their sisters — or their sweet-hearts — should be the victims of charity entertainments.

I acknowledge that I am antique enough to be troubled about points that do not in the least seem to trouble the present generation. You no doubt wonder how it happens that I am not an old maid. I certainly would not let a daughter of mine play in amateur theatricals, still less dance, before a promiscuous audience admitted by fee. The matter is different when the character of the hostess or of the managers is sufficient guarantee that the audience will be properly selected. You may smile, and think that after a most agonized straining at a gnat I am very smoothly gulping down a camel with the biggest possible hump. I know that in any company men will be likely to be admitted who are not what they should

be. If they are there, however, they are conscious when the company is supposed to be selected; they have no excuse for saying to themselves that the girls who play are indifferent as to the character of the audience. The girl who acts in a private house has at least not put herself in the position of being on sight to any man who cares to buy a ticket.

In any case, there are almost no stage dances that are more than ordinary ballroom performances that a girl has any business to give before men. Certainly they must be dreadfully stupid if there are. She cheapens herself if she gives any dance with fire and verve enough to make it worth seeing. I sat the other evening where I heard a couple of men talking about the dance that Cora Printise gave at the Camelion Theatre for the benefit of the Indian Mission, and I should go wild to hear anybody talk about you in that way. The shape of her body, her posturing, her physical attractions, were discussed so that I had to get up and take myself out of hearing. It made me sick! And they were not cheap men. They were just ordinary, not

over-refined men-about-town, talking about a performance at a public theatre that they had paid to see, in the terms in which they were accustomed to discuss any such performance. I do not believe they would ever have dreamed of talking so freely of any girl they had seen at a private play. Cora is a good girl ; but her love of dancing and her vanity — and for that matter the fashions of the time — carry her away.

But I hate to write about this sort of thing. It should all go without saying. If you dance in public, I'll disown you, and that is the conclusion of the whole matter!

P. S. Who is the man you don't name, who was so agreeable at the hunt-breakfast? Is it anybody I know about? Is he really so much older, or is it just your childish way of looking at him? Of course any man that has come to years of discretion seems to you a grandfather.

## X

### THE PRICE OF POPULARITY

So you think my last letter was horrid. It was, rather, but the facts of the case made it so, not I. To-day, however, I will try not to be anything but light and airy,—but no, that is impossible. I am over forty, and more substantial than I used to be. With me, as with the rest of womankind, life runs to waist. It's a poor pun, but a grewsome fact!

An old woman I knew before you were born used to say: "If you want to be popular, why don't you take the trouble to be?" I remembered the saying — my vanity makes me explain that it was not said to me! — because it annoyed the girl she said it to, and because I could n't understand what in the world she meant. It seemed to me, as it probably seems to you, that one is born to be liked or disliked, and that there is nothing to do but to accept the decree of fate and bear it as well as pos-

sible if it works the wrong way. I have modified my opinion a good deal since, and especially since I began to think about Abby Tilitson.

Abby went to school with us, and if ever there was a girl who was regarded as a mistake, it was Abby. She was plain to a degree that was almost a reflection on the benevolence of Providence; she had a positive genius for dressing outrageously; her gowns would have been so many crimes, if they had n't been so pathetic in the evidence that they were well intended; she had no more conversation than a toad in a hole; and the only thing that could ever be said in her favor when she was at school was that she was clever and good-natured. How she got started on the right track, I never knew; and I could n't have believed that any live girl would have had the perseverance to stick to it and work out her salvation the way she did. I never think of what she did under her disadvantages without being ashamed to remember what the rest of us accomplished with all our advantages.

You want to know, of course, what she did

and how she did it. I can't begin to tell you anything more than the marked things, when of course trifles really counted most. She made a regular study of dress. She read about it, and she studied pictures; she took lessons in drawing and water-colors for no other earthly thing than just to learn how to dress herself. She learned to give up the idea that what she wanted was what she ought to wear. It's a great thing when a woman comes to realize that she really does n't know anything about clothing herself, but must go to work to learn! Abby was always good-natured, and of course that counted for a lot. She was forced, poor thing, — only I ought to say lucky thing! — to think of others because she knew she had her way to win. By thinking of what others liked or wanted she came to be wonderfully sympathetic. The men used to confide everything to her, and we poor fools decided among ourselves that Abby was to be a nice old maid, hearing the love affairs of successive generations, but having none of her own. We knew she was in a position to have a lot of influence with the men, for of course she

could affect what they thought of us, and we all made a point of being nice to her. Indeed, we all found ourselves being fond of her without knowing how we came to be so. She was clever, I said before. She worked like a galley slave at French and Italian and her music. If a foreigner came, Abby was naturally invited to talk with him, and she kept herself up in all that was going on. She took foreign papers and read foreign books, and, but oh my, how that girl did work!

Abby had n't money enough to entertain much, but she invented all sorts of little things for the dinners and the dances of her friends, and of course a good many times she got the credit of it. She went to a gymnasium, and she took lessons from a music teacher to learn to laugh well. She was simply a wonder. It all went on so quietly, too, that we thought nothing of it. We only said now and then how much she had improved. We thought what a pleasant old maid she was going to make, — when one fine day her engagement was announced to George Whittington, the richest, handsomest, most desirable, the most alto-



gether lovely catch of half a dozen years. We were simply as flat as a dandelion that the lawn-roller's gone over! — Only you know girls have a sense of justice, if they'll own up, and all of us who'd been throwing ourselves at George Whittington's head had to own that she really deserved him.

My dear, that taught me a lesson. Fortunately, I did n't care about George Whittington in any other way than for the fun of beating the rest of the girls, and even then I had a sneaking affection down deep inside of me that would n't have let me marry anybody but the man I did; — 'only I should have liked the fun of carrying George off! But I realized then as I never had before how much lies in the power of a girl who has the grit to make the most of herself. I knew what my old friend meant about taking the trouble to be popular.

Of course I have n't given you a fair idea of the way Abby improved herself. The most important thing I have n't even mentioned; that is, that she set herself to earn everything she had. Every one of us is more or less in the habit of taking what we can get in the way of

attention and so on, without bothering to consider whether it is our due or not. Abby made it a point to deserve every littlest thing. If you think of it, you will see how constantly you presume on your good looks, your position, your money, and all the rest of it, to bring you things you would never expect if you were not a social success. To a certain extent this is inevitable, and you are lucky to be in a position where you have so much to presume on. To a certain extent, too, it is proper. A girl who does n't let it be understood that she realizes her social rights will end by having very little to realize.

I wonder people are so seldom frank about this sort of thing. We all have a feeling that the ideal nobility is that which has no need to be assertive, and it grates on our republicanly aristocratic nerves to read or to hear of the struggles of royalty over questions of precedence. That is all very well, if social standing did n't have two sides to it. The aristocracy has to be recognized, or it is n't aristocracy. Eternal vigilance is the price of social pre-eminence. It sounds vulgar when it is put

baldly, but the fine old *grande dame* of the romance that embodies our democratic ideal would never for a moment forget what was due to her, or allow the least infringement on the privileges of her rank. In daily life you may decide that the game is not worth the candle, but unless you retire from the world and live where you've no social equals, you must to a greater or less degree struggle to hold your own. The prince, or the private person, who consents to be thrust into the background by vulgar pushers very soon finds himself in that undesirable position. I think myself that if we are to pray to be given grace to be contented in that station in life to which it has pleased God to call us, we owe it to ourselves and to society not to fall below it. You have to insist on the respect of servants if you wish to preserve it; and in the same way you have to let it be known that you expect and demand certain social rights and recognition, certain just consideration, as a matter of deference to your standing in society.

The point is, of course, the way this is done. The stamp of breeding is to do it delicately.

The ideal is that this insistence is never wanting, but never evident. The vulgar person is one who claims what he has no right to, and who, moreover, lets his insistence be seen. — I have got pretty far away from Abby, somehow, and I must stop writing; but she was a wonderful instance of a person who earned the right to social consideration, and then got it and took it. There's a beautiful moral in this, if I had n't tangled it all up! Good-by.

## XI

### THE GRACE OF WOMANLINESS

I AM not trying to persuade you to be different from all your friends. Of course a girl must on the whole do pretty much what her mates do, or she will be set down as odd and all the rest of it, and treated accordingly. I understand exactly what you mean, and I sympathize with you. Your mates make up your world, and what you or I or any other human being really cares about is the opinion of his own world, no matter what that world may be. An old diplomat took me in to dinner last night, and I was amused to see how completely he put all the rest of mankind aside, and cared only what was thought of him in diplomatic circles. I told him that he evidently had no especial regard for the opinion of the people, either of our country or his own.

“Why should I have?” he asked, with the greatest frankness. “What does anybody but

a diplomat know about diplomacy? You are a clever woman, but what can you understand of the finesse of diplomatic negotiations?"

"Only what you are good enough to tell me," I admitted.

"Just so. That's exactly it. You know what I or some other man in the diplomatic circle chooses to explain. That is the way with the public; and of course we should explain far less to the public than to you. Why should I care what the public, or even so clever a woman as you, happens to think about the management of delicate negotiations? Of course we all wish to be thought well of, and I always put things so as to stand as high in your estimation as possible: that's part of diplomacy; but why should I care for an estimate which must depend not upon what we do, but on the way we represent what we have done to persons who do not really — if you will pardon me — understand?"

The more you think of this, the more evident it is, and the more general is the application. We regard the opinion of our own world, because our own world is the only one

that can really understand. We cannot make ourselves care very seriously for anything outside. You like me to think well of you, and you have, I dare say, a very flattering estimate of my judgment; but if you thought me a Solomon in petticoats and a Queen of Sheba rolled into one with him, you'd inevitably come back in your mind to what the girls of your set think. It is their view you wish to know; their approbation is the only thing that can satisfy you. You can't help it, and I am not in the least sure that you would be any better off if you could and did. You stand or fall by their opinion because you are of them and of their world.

Well, then, you ask how you are to be so different from them and yet keep in with them, have their respect, — or their admiration, for which at your age you very likely care a good deal more. You seem to feel that I am advising you to come out from them, and to be so different that they will regard you as half alien. Nothing could be farther from what I mean. It is true that certain things which are common I most earnestly advise you to avoid; but

I have carefully said that it would be wise to do some of them in moderation, and others I am sure would be condemned by the underlying feeling of every girl at all well-bred, so that after all you would be respected for keeping clear of them. You would even be secretly if not openly approved by the very girls who protest most against the stiffness and narrowness of anybody who ventures to speak out against the unmaidenly tricks which disfigure too many of our modern young ladies.

You very likely heard rumors a few years ago of the wave of vulgarity which swept over Boston society in the form of the outrageously underbred performances of the buds of the year. The girls who came out that winter were for the most part born and bred in families where courtesy is one of the cardinal virtues, and yet the town — and, for that matter, other towns — rang with their hoidenish and vulgar antics. Of course the things most talked about are always the work of very few. If a girl should dance the *can-can* in the middle of a ballroom, or fling a hymn-book at a friend in church, the chatter about such per-



formances would be enough to convince one ignorant of the truth that all society was going at once to the bad. Very likely it would be true that society must be in a pretty bad case before a girl would come to the point of doing anything so outrageous; for, after all, we women have an instinctive sense of what the circle in which we move will put up with, and the worst hoiden that ever lived had consciously or unconsciously one eye out for the effect she was producing. The girls who do the things that have what might be called a *succès de scandale* are not really the most important or the most successful of a season, but merely those who have sacrificed their good name to notoriety. They have their little hour of intoxication, — on very poor tippie, too, I should say! — and if they are of any genuine character, they must soon come to be ashamed of acts which would hardly be possible among shop-girls.

Now the question is, how far girls who do ill-bred pranks are approved by their own mates. You certainly would not think of joining the ranks of those who get talked about for

this sort of thing ; and these girls are really condemned by their peers, if not so openly or so emphatically as by their elders, yet none the less surely. The question comes, don't you see, as to where the line is to be drawn between the acts your contemporaries approve and those they only tolerate. I am not advising you to be singular, except in ways that will of themselves so command admiration or respect that you can afford to persist in them, no matter if you are the only girl who has the sense to see that they are proper. The extravagant, the bizarre, the vulgar, are always most in evidence; but I am far from being willing to allow that they therefore are most characteristic, or most likely to be indorsed. I believe you can depend on the ultimate good sense and good breeding of any set to which there is any possibility of your belonging.

You are sure, moreover, to have a private standard. You will inevitably select among the girls you know certain ones for whose opinions you really care, even though you see them to be in a minority against the mass of your associates. All that I have ever urged is

that you carry yourself so as to deserve the respect of those of your peers whose opinion is best worth while. Of course you must be like the girls of your generation, — but like which girls, the best or the worst?

In the long run, too, the opinion even of you girls is that of your elders. You damsels suppose, with the feeling of superiority of youth that is one of its most enviable qualities and its most adorable errors, that you make your own judgments, and hold to them entirely uninfluenced by the views of those older and more experienced. You will very likely not believe me when I say that this is an utter delusion. You will tell yourself that of course I think so because I am one of the elders aforesaid; but that old people — we are all old to you! — cannot understand the girls of your generation. You are sure you are different, very different, amazingly different, from any generation of girls that ever went before you. Bless your dear hearts! We thought so, and your daughters will think so; and to the end of time youth will always suppose that it is so new and so wise that age cannot begin to enter

into its subtilities. Yet in spite of this you are shaped and moulded by the opinions and the standards of the very generation you suppose to be having no influence on you at all.

This being so, it follows that in the end you are likely to look back and regret those things by which you have outraged the proprieties as set forth by your elders; and it is wiser, in a world where a good deal of regret is inevitable, no matter how hard we try to avoid it, to save yourself from regrets that are useless, and which have been purchased with so little real enjoyment.

This I do not dwell upon, because you cannot fully enter into my feeling on the subject; but at the risk of moralizing, I must say that, after all, even judgment by your peers gives place to judgment by yourself. Self-respect is a possession too precious to be parted with at any price that I have ever seen offered. Don't set me down as an old goose when I say that, with your lineage and training, you will find that the things I have urged you to steer clear of are only those that you could not do without being ashamed of having fallen below the

standard that it is in your blood to demand of yourself.

There is one thing more. — I had in my youth a great-aunt, a terrible great-aunt, who did her duty by me with a firmness worthy of an old Puritan. She snubbed me so that I am convinced I am mentally inches shorter than I should have been if great-aunt Tabitha had not so persistently trampled on my youthful inclinations. She told me once, looking over her spectacles with her hard gray eyes, — a sort of pale whitish-green-gray, you know, like the flat moss on a rail-fence in the country: how I did hate great-aunt Tabitha and her gray eyes! — she told me that I had been born with “a sinful propensity to the iniquity of superfluous speech.” Over-meekness I certainly had not been born with, and I retorted that I could bear that better than the iniquity of superfluous great-aunts. She was a stiff-necked old goose, but I am sometimes afraid that she was right about the superfluous speech. All the same, I must go on with my preachment just a little further.

The feeling we have about doing as our own

kind do and of being judged by them is perfectly natural, and, indeed, inevitable; but it has its dangers. I spare you the obvious talk about how easy it is to fall into cowardly moral weakness from the fear of being thought singular. If the idea is n't in your nerves already, I cannot beat it into your bones, and I know enough not to try. I only wish to say that we are pushing acceptance of the notions of our friends too far, if we let it obscure our individuality. To conform to the customs and habits and manners of the crowd is a common impulse with most of us. The woman who has a natural tendency to decide for herself what she will accept and what she will refuse in the matter of social tradition and social fashions is born — for good or for bad — with individuality. The woman who is not born with this habit of mind had better cultivate it. That is the only way to protect herself against the danger of being so like everybody else as not to count as a real person at all. She is only one of a crowd, and you can, I am sure, name off-hand plenty of examples among your own acquaintances. Do at least think for yourself

in opposition to your set sufficiently to have your personality marked and distinct.

You will do well to remember, too, that the girl who establishes her character for independence is allowed to be independent, while she who is a slave to the opinions of others is in the end not expected to say that her soul is her own. The attitude of independence, moreover, is admired and envied; so that if you should carry out every wise suggestion I make to you,— which Heaven knows you are not in the least likely to! — you would in the end find yourself not condemned by the opinion of your circle, not regarded with scorn by your so-much-dreaded peers, but looked up to by them as a real person, determined to be a law unto herself, and for that very reason to be respected and envied.

## XII

### TO SPEAK WITH TONGUES

YOUR Count is really delightful, and I am obliged to you for sending him to me. An accomplished Frenchman with the right flavor is a charming beverage, and Count de Guarie has exactly the proper *bouquet*. — Does n't that sound well? My husband furnished that simile, but I am using it in conversation with excellent effect! — I made a dinner for the Count, and it went off very well after I got my guests. I had a lot of bother to find people that I wanted who would go well together, and who could speak French good enough for me to be willing to exhibit it to an educated Frenchman. The Count has so pitifully little English, it would have been a gross violation of hospitality to exact any of it, and I was anxious that he should enjoy himself without feeling as if he were having a language lesson.

He knows less English than most of the for-



eigners who come over. When he called first, he had great difficulty in making the maid understand what he wanted. She is rather stupid, and she declares that he asked if "de madame shave?" He probably said "*chez elle*," and I think she suspected him of some design of selling razors. I determined, as soon as I found he was so agreeable, that he should have at least one dinner in his own tongue in America, and from the profusion of his gratitude I conclude that such a luxury has not often come in his way since he landed.

I am constantly surprised and irritated that the men and women of good social position in this country are so generally content to go through life ignorant of foreign tongues. There is hardly another country in the civilized world where persons who expect to be regarded as well-bred are so poorly equipped in this respect. The English generally affect a supreme contempt for all languages except their own; and are really worse than we are. The French do not, of course, know English, with rare exceptions, but if they are educated

people, they are familiar with the speech of the chief Continental nations. We seem to follow the fashion of our British ancestors in this regard; — and an enormous pity it is, too.

If I had a daughter to bring up, I would see that she could read and write, knew enough arithmetic to keep her check-book straight, and then I would have her put practically all the rest of her energies on languages. She would get general information enough by reading, I would risk that; and if she lacked the smattering — a great deal better word would be “spattering” — of science and the “ologies” that girls are trained in nowadays, I should be rather pleased than otherwise. If she could speak French and Italian really well, I should be comfortable in my mind about her; and if, in addition, she knew German, I should thank Heaven for giving me a daughter admirably educated!

Of course you think this is extravagant; but it is only sensible. No girl could learn to speak a couple of foreign languages well without acquiring a great many ideas. More than that, she would be sure to have her mind broadened

and her views of life enlarged. With a knowledge of languages, and her reading, I would trust her against any misguided girl that ever made melancholy barrenness of her mind in a woman's college!

It is very stupid to travel without at least one or two foreign languages. Any girl nowadays is likely to travel, and all girls who have money enough to spend much on education are apt to go about the world a good deal. One gets so little out of a country that keeps her at arm's length because she is ignorant of the speech of the people that I am tempted to say one might almost as well stay at home. Of course I don't mean anything so extreme as that, but it is wonderful what a difference even a limited knowledge of the language of a foreign country makes in traveling there.

To say anything about the advantages of being able to read literature in the original is rather stupid, but I hold so firmly to reading as a means of intellectual salvation that I have to insist upon the importance of meeting an author on his own ground. Reading translations is a good deal like hearing the voice of a

great singer squeakingly distorted by a graphophone. You should keep in mind, god-daughter of a most old-fashioned *marraine*, that reading is — or should be, according to my theory — a woman's university. Your mental development will depend on what and how you read rather than upon what you study. Modern education seems to me a good deal off the track because it ignores this, and it is the very first thing to be considered in educating girls.

Now and then a woman appears who can really study, and does study; who takes to some extent the intellectual initiative, and who makes real additions to the knowledge of the world. How rare this is, anybody may appreciate who takes the trouble to count up the number of such women who have thus far appeared. When one does arise, all we women are called upon to wonder at such a prodigy, and to applaud her as a glory to her sex. I must confess that, while I am ready enough to admire, and while I do admire, my admiration goes to the individual and not to the woman. More than that, I find it impossible not to feel

that this sort of an intellectual triumph is won by being so much less feminine.

Sherman insists that I have a theory that woman is possessed of intuition as a reward for having through the ages ignored the lower habit of reasoning; and that I constantly fear that if women become too intellectual, they will sink back into being simply rational, instead of intuitive. Of course this is only his teasing, and as a man he cannot see that there is real truth in it. A man reasons, and a woman just knows; but in the end the woman's intuition is generally proved to be right, and for my part I am not able to see how it would be better to be in a slough of logic, uncertain whether one would get out on the right side after all, than to sail serenely through the air to the goal at once! There is really a lot of truth in what Sherman says, I believe, although of course as a man puts it, and from a man's point of view, it sounds ridiculous. (This is what, in the novels of my youth, or my mother's youth, which I read in mine, was called a digression. Now it is called "another story.")

Oh! I meant to say in that digression that

I hope you are not silly enough to think I am belittling my sex. We women are a hundred times cleverer than men in our way, — than most men, that is; not than all men. But to study, to deduce, to philosophize, even to originate, is n't our part. I tell Sherman that men are the miners who dig ideas as ore out of the ground, do the heavy work of getting them into usable shape, and then we women give to the gold its finish and polish. At any rate, after all the innumerable, unending, inconclusive arguments over the comparative mental force and standing of the masculine and the feminine mind are tossed out on the dust-heap where they belong, I take my stand on experience and observation, and declare boldly that the best results in culture are attained by the man who studies and the woman who reads, — and reads, of course, in as many languages as possible.

The social side, however, is the one on which just now the importance of knowing languages is likely to appeal to you. You need, as every girl in good society needs, the training of the best company of other coun-

tries. You should be able to hold your own in the best circles of Paris or Rome; and, what is of more importance, be able to appreciate the *finesse*, the *nuances*, of foreign talk. Italian and French conversation in the best circles may or may not, on the whole, be better than the best talk in America, but it is certainly more subtle, more finished, more surely and completely a work of art.

To be able, moreover, to converse with foreigners in their own tongue gives an especial social power. No accomplishment confers a more marked distinction; and as modern travel increases, the opportunities for using the accomplishment become more numerous. Think how many foreigners of considerable distinction come to America now; and I confess I feel that every woman is bound to have patriotism enough to do her part toward sending these visitors home with respect, or, if possible, with admiration, for our country.

The dangers of using foreign speech are evident enough, and they have furnished jokes for the comic papers from the time there were any comic papers, I suppose; and will to the

end of time, or till all mankind speaks the same tongue. While Count de Guarie was here, Estelle Trainor undertook to talk art to him, — Heaven only knows why! She asked him if he admired Botticelli, and went on to say that the picture she loved most in the world was Botticelli's "*Venus mal de mer*"! Of course that is unbelievably absurd; but she said it. We could either of us tell a string of stories of this sort; but I have confidence enough in you to be sure that you would at least know what you were saying, if you ventured to address a foreigner in his own tongue.

The end of the whole business is that I beg of you to cultivate foreign speech, — learn, I mean, to speak languages, as well as to read them. Never mind if a lot of other things have to be left undone; we can none of us do everything in this world, or a thousandth part of the thousandth part of what we would like to do. Life consists chiefly in deciding what not to attempt, and wisdom is only another name for judicious elimination. — There, I cannot come nearer to a modern epigram than that if I write for a month!



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Oh, what a wise choice you made in a god-mother! The selection was so wonderful in one so young as you were at the time that it proves my claim that women are born with intuition! Good-night.

## XIII

### THE MORALS OF SOCIAL DUTY

So you wonder at my being surprised that more people do not learn languages, do you, when so many persons are indifferent to education generally? This is true enough, though you have no business, my dear, to be making such uncharitable generalizations! I shall begin to fear I am training you by my letters to be altogether too sophisticated and worldly wise, if you take to bringing out accusations against your whole generation.

To speak seriously, however, this is all part, I suppose, of the general fact that we have here in America some social instincts, but few social traditions. Sherman says the traditions which came over with us from England survived the Revolution, but vanished in the Civil War. Perhaps; but I think the trouble is that the struggle necessary to make this continent habitable has so absorbed the best energies of

Americans that we have in general come to be too crude to feel the necessity of studying and working to fill a place in society. Once or twice in my life I have been so placed as to be able to see how children of royal families abroad have to train for their position. There is not an American child alive who would go through such a probation to earn the crown of half Europe! I came to the conclusion that a good deal of the sympathy we have for child-labor in factories and mines might well be expended on the poor little fagged wretches that are being made into monarchs.

Even of the children of the nobility, — of the old nobility, I mean, — much the same thing is true. The children of the Duchess of Zibelstein have to toil tremendously. Once, when I was staying with her, I had a good deal of talk about how children should be brought up, and I came home feeling that in this country we had not begun to understand what it means for children to work at their studies. The Duchess insisted that modern fashions of education sacrifice the whole future of a child to its pleasure in the first

dozen years of its life; and I can see why she should think so. I am sure her conscience must be clear on that score, for she did keep the little "ducklings," as Sherman says the offspring of a duke should be called, tremendously hard at work. They are reaping the reward now by having the social world at their feet. In this country we certainly do not understand that sort of thing at all.

Some time when society in America becomes more organic, I suppose those who have any real claim to lead will be forced to make their claim good in some way besides proving the length of their bank accounts. Good society can no more exist without wealth than a man without air; but no more can it exist on money solely than a man can flourish who has no food but his breath. We shall arrive at last, I am confident, at a civilized recognition of the fact that it is the duty of a certain class to nourish social tradition, just as it is the function of another class to dig ditches. I am democratic enough in one way, but I cannot be such a fool as not to recognize that division into classes is natural and inev-

itable. Fortunately, it is, it seems to me, also wholesome and beneficent.

Nowadays, however, those who ought to do their part in the body politic by keeping up society seem to suppose they have no duty except to amuse themselves in the most flashy and vulgar fashion. They are too indolent, too selfish, or too shallow even to fit themselves for any enjoyments except those which really and properly belong to the *bourgeoisie*. They cannot for a moment get it into their heads that they owe anything to society. Given the difference of the times, the "smart" set of to-day — is n't it a vulgar word, and does n't it exactly express a certain class? — is more objectionable than the French nobility of the days which preceded and brought about the Revolution. The French nobles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were corrupt enough and cruel enough, and they treated the lower classes as if there could be no Day of Judgment; but of the "smart" set to-day all this is equally true, except for the limitations imposed by different social and political conditions; they are as cruel, as overbearing, as

they dare, and as corrupt, in too many cases, as they have imagination enough to be. The old nobility had at least a certain sort of self-respect, a sense of responsibility to their order, some kind of realization of the spirit they embodied in that most magnificent phrase, *Noblesse oblige*.

It is a great pity that social distinctions are not more clearly recognized in America, or at least that they are not recognized more rationally. They of course exist in some sort, as they must and will exist everywhere, and the result of having no legitimate class gradations is here, as it is sure to be anywhere, that mere money pushes itself to the front. It is melancholy to think how far this has gone in American society. In the old times when the social traditions that had come over from England were still in force, things were in a much better condition than they are now; but these have been outgrown, and nothing but money has taken their place. Anything seems to do for gilding, and an aristocracy of money is about the most vulgar thing on earth. The general tone of society cannot be kept up with-

out a standard, and I believe in having a class refined, exclusive, rigorously select, as an element necessary to the good of the whole.

In a republic we resent the principle of exclusion; but nothing that is at all desirable can be kept admirable without the exclusion of the unworthy. If I admit that socially every person is as good as every other, I have done away with the only theory on which any society worth the name can rest. We need a class which recognizes that certain qualifications are essential to the best and most refined social intercourse, and which rigorously excludes any person who lacks these. We have the chance here in America to establish requirements higher and better than have ever been known in the world; but instead of doing anything of the kind, we seem to be getting farther and farther from it every day.

Unless such a class is thoroughly well established, its members will never feel any real responsibility about keeping up its traditions. Indeed, until it is well established it can have no traditions. People must be impressed with the necessity of living up to a high standard of

cultivation. They must feel the demands of their order as an incentive to work; and if this work by the nature of things be chiefly in the lines of the artistic rather than of the material, if instead of with morals they seem to be concerned largely with manners, they are still playing a part in the advancement of civilization that is by no means unimportant. In these days, indeed, when the three graces have in popular favor been replaced by the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker, and when if Apollo revisited earth the chief interest would be in his bank account, to keep alive in the community some notion of the refinements of life, to cherish the artistic and even the becoming, would seem to me one of the most timely and valuable of offices.

As far as morals goes, too, I believe the influence of an established and recognized class of social leaders would be better than the present condition of things. An established order has as a necessity some sort of a code, and any code is better than none. The fast, over-rich set have no sort of standard, and the result is most lamentable.



I am getting run away with by a hobby, perhaps; and I do not expect that even if we agree, you and I can establish a social standard. I do believe, though, that we can preserve our self-respect by refusing to put ourselves on a level with the vulgar money-bags, the immoral devotees of the divorce-habit, and the people of that sort that are ruining American society.

All this may not seem to you to have much to do with the study of languages, but it really is part of the whole subject of how unfair it is for so many persons to thrust themselves into society without being willing to take the trouble to fit themselves to do their part. Sherman sums the whole matter up by saying they do not know the rules of the game; but I tell him the difficulty is that nobody is prepared to make it clear what the rules of the social game are, or even to insist that there are any.

And now, miss, if you do not set yourself to learn instantly and thoroughly all the languages of Europe, Asia, and Africa, you will prove yourself to be either hopelessly

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hard of heart, or stubbornly dull of comprehension!

I have read this over, and I see I have quoted Sherman until you will think me a fool; but yesterday was the anniversary of our wedding-day, and he gave me the loveliest sapphire!

## XIV

### THE COURTESY OF BOOKS

WHAT shall you read? Do you expect me to send you one of those idiotic things called "A List of the One Hundred Best Books," or "The World's Masterpieces of Literature"? You say it is all very well for me to declare that your cultivation depends on your reading, and then to leave you without telling you anything more. Very well, my dear; I will go a step farther, and tell you that your cultivation depends on what you have the sense to choose to read.

What shall you read, you precious goose? Read what you like. You want somebody else to take a responsibility that you can't for the life of you put off of your own shoulders. You have to select, and to do it out of the constantly multiplying, already infinite number of books that adorn or encumber the world. I cannot tell you what to read. Only if you find

you like trash in the way of reading, you may as well recognize the fact that you are by nature or self-indulgence worthy to be nothing better than a hewer of wood or a drawer of water, — and are not even likely to bring much credit to those eminently useful and respectable if not socially exalted classes.

I can and will give you a few of the conclusions to which experience has brought me in regard to this business; and you may accept them or not, as you choose.

If you read at all, you must read for the fun of it, or you will get no real good. I have in my time conscientiously dragged my slow and painful way through a lot of most admirable and improving works without getting the smallest particle of benefit. I was not interested, and so nothing stuck. I don't know how it is with a man, — Sherman seems to be able to make himself interested in books just by determining to be; but that seems so unnatural I cannot believe it to be true of the majority even of men, unless, indeed, it is part of the difference which makes them study in a way we never can; — I am sure a woman

must be interested in a book, or it all slips through her mind as water runs through a sieve.

You are to read what you enjoy; but you must have some sort of a conscience, and if you have, you will feel it coming into this affair as into anything else. The New England conscience is becoming somewhat modified in the course of our rapid moral evolution; but it is still a pretty effective agent. You will find, I am sure, that you cannot have much fun reading unworthy things, because your irritable little conscience will keep twinging like a neuralgic spot when you have been sitting in a draught. — That is a very good simile, but it occurs to me to hope you are too young to appreciate it! — The line that your particular scruples draw between books good and books bad, I cannot pretend to say; but from what I know of you, I suppose it to be respectably high in the scale.

In reading, moreover, you will find it not amiss to use at least as much common sense as you would employ in ordering a dinner. You have been told a thousand times not to make

your mental diet all sweets or all solids; and I see no reason why I should dilate on this and other equally obvious things. They are the stock in trade of the professional moralist, and they figure in every lecture on literature. They never fail, these improving maxims, because, as no reader ever pays much if any attention to them, they are always in order.

If I were one of those didactic writers, I would call your attention to the fact that you get a great deal more pleasure out of your reading if you vary it. To keep on eating one kind of food uninterruptedly is soon most stupid and cloying, and kills the appetite altogether. You know enough to select books worth reading; just mix the light with the grave, and go ahead. Don't bother about a "course." You are not studying to fit yourself for professional work or an examination, — that process of cramming your head with facts that do not interest you for the sake of pouring them out in turn to somebody not in the least interested in them either. You are just a young woman reading primarily for the purpose of gaining a broad culture, and doing

it along the lines of your personal preference and pleasure. It is well enough now and then to begin a course, if your conscience has a morbid turn that way. Get one of those lists of improving books which are begun with moral enthusiasm, and finished, if at all, with mortal ennui. You will not, I am inclined to think, be obstinate enough ever to force your way to the end of such a list. The process always seemed to me a good deal like resolutely eating one's way stolidly through every item on a menu, regardless of appetite or digestion.

I hope you are incapable of reading simply for the sake of being able to give an opinion of a book. Now and then you may have occasion to go through something just to see what it is worth; but that is not real reading. You get most from a book when you let yourself go, and revel in it for pure joy. Mrs. Browning has borrowed this idea from me, and says something of the sort, — that we get anything worth while only when we plunge headforemost “into a book's profound,” with no reckoning how much we are to get from it. Keeping an accurate account with literature is

hardly more sensible than trying to draw up a balance-sheet with love.

You will have opinions, as a matter of fact, and will judge books by them; but if your reading is done in the best way, your judgment should generally be wrong when you finish reading anything that is worth while, anything with genuine life-blood in it. When you have had time to digest it, to let your mind almost unconsciously consider and weigh, you may and should have an intelligent estimate of its defects and its merits; but when you have just put the book down, you should still be too much under the spell of the enthusiasm in which you read to be able to criticise acutely or judiciously.

I have no patience with those people who think it necessary to have a cut-and-dried opinion of everything they read, as if they were responsible for the intellectual condition of the world. After all, a sense of moral responsibility is very easily developed into mere morbid vanity; and some of our Puritan ancestors seem to me to have gone a good way in this direction. They so exaggerated the impor-



tance of distinguishing between right and wrong, down to the finest possible shades, that they came to feel almost as if the difference were not one of fact, but depended upon their individual opinion. I am happy to say that I do not feel that my making a mistake upsets the moral balance of the universe.

Of course we should try and do try to look at things fairly, but we are all likely to overestimate the importance of our decisions. We make a great moral question of our opinion of books, and feel almost as if an erroneous decision might unconsciously commit us to the mysterious unpardonable sin, that bugbear which tormented the souls of our dear dead and gone forefathers, — and yet, after all, it really matters so very little!

Great-aunt Tabby, terror of my childhood, once looked over her glasses at me with her cold eyes and demanded: "When you retire for the night, do you consider the moral bearing of each act you have done during the day?"

"Goodness!" I said. "Of course I don't! Do you?"

"Always," she replied, with preternatural gravity, and a folding of her thin lips that used to drive me wild. "And whatever I do during the day, I do with an eye to that solemn retrospect."

"Well, aunt Tabby," I said, as sweetly as possible, "I am lucky enough not to be so given to wickedness as to have to watch myself like that. When I go to bed, I go to sleep."

She stiffened up her lean neck, — such is my hardness of heart that even now, when she has been in her grave thirty years, I cannot even write kindly of poor old great-aunt Tabby! — and set her mouth more severely than ever.

"I should be sorry to die in my sleep without having had a realizing sense of what my day had been," she retorted, with the crushing solemnity of seventeen Cotton Mathers boiled down into one.

I was too young and too flippanant to neglect the chance for the last word, so I said, foolishly enough, that I had never died in my sleep, so I could n't tell how it would seem; and then I whisked away before her horror at my levity had allowed her to catch her breath.

Some superior women read in the way aunt Tabby lived, — always with an eye to after-consideration of the book. They cannot bear the idea that they might die in their sleep without a “realizing sense” of what they ought to think of every page they go over. I do not care, and I do not bother.

An opinion is of some value when you have to talk about books, although if you have any cleverness, it is not at all necessary; but if you have read them freely and whole-heartedly, you will find an opinion ready when you need one. It will be a great deal fresher, too, for being put into words for the first time on the spot and at the minute. The most intelligent opinion is by no means necessarily the one most carefully prepared beforehand; and the most spontaneous and most telling one is never the one you cut out and basted yesterday, — at least, I do not see how it can be.

Here is a hint you are too young to be likely to care for now, but if the fashion of discussing literature has not disappeared utterly from the face of the earth by the time you come to my years, you may find the point of value. If

you wish to talk about books and be novel and seem knowing, have the best English books sent over to you as soon as they are out. A little trouble does it all. I have a very clever and well-educated English friend, a semi-invalid, who for her own pleasure keeps track of all the new publications. Whenever a book appears that seems to her worth while, she sends the name to a London bookseller with whom I have an account, and he forwards the volume to me. I read it for the enjoyment I get out of it; and then I talk of it judiciously for the sake of doing my duty to society; always, my dearest goddaughter, always, from a sense of my duty in upholding the intellectual tone of society! If I do get credit for being particularly acute and wonderfully well informed, can I help that? There is some danger that I grow vain, but I preserve my modesty by reflecting what an admirable ideal I am furnishing for all the young people about me!

## XV

### THE FINE ART OF DINING

You say you wish you were a good diner-out; well, my child, to urge upon you once more what my old lady said about being popular, why not take the trouble to make yourself one? You can hardly at your age expect to be past mistress of all social arts, but you might well be on the road toward perfection.

It is really amazing how little appreciation there is of the fact that to be a good diner-out requires thought and care. It is generally assumed that if a woman can dress herself properly, and knows enough to talk in turn with the man on either side of her, there is nothing more in the matter. Dining out, however, is an art, and like any other art, it must be studied.

Some things are so patent that the most stupid should know them, and yet it is constantly evident how few persons take the

trouble to think about them. The diner-out should know relationships, pedigrees, and family traditions, so that, at least in the society where she generally goes, she is aware who is who, and understands how far and in what tone it is proper to discuss the absent. It has been said that one of the distinctive features of good society is that most of the talk is about persons; and it follows that nobody can get on who is not fairly well informed about the members of her set. This is especially true of dining. Personal anecdotes are constantly told and expected at dinners, and nothing so surely casts a gloom over a party as the introduction of a story at the expense of somebody about whom one of the guests will be sensitive. My dear, the agonies I have suffered at dinner-tables where stupid persons did n't realize whom they were telling their stories before could be expressed only in terms of fire and brimstone!

What do you think of a man who insists on talking about kleptomaniacs with a woman whose sister is always getting the family into trouble by purloining things from shops; or

telling a deliciously funny tale of the millionaire who married his cook, to a woman whose father had just done the same abominable thing? One really does not achieve social success by relating all the particulars of the elopement of a lady with her coachman, when the sister of his right-hand neighbor has been guilty of an escapade of the same sort. All these things I have heard, and I have always been struck with the fatuous insensibility of the fool who is making such a *faux pas* to the efforts of the entire company to stop him. Nothing short of absolutely cramming a napkin into the mouth of a man once started on an ill-timed story of this kind will divert him from it.

Of course mistakes of this sort are to be avoided only by care, or by a pretty thorough knowledge of the company in which one is. Life is too short to allow of one's learning all about everybody in society, and even then, if one is away from home, it is impossible to know the company; but it is not difficult to keep clear of dangerous subjects. There are plenty of things to talk about to the son of a

forger besides the condition and occupation of cultivated men who find themselves in prison. I heard this done by a stupid woman one night until I had to speak to her across the table, and ask her a personal question so impertinent that she was forced to attend. She had resisted everything else, and of course I apologized afterward, but I could with better grace have shaken her.

The woman who wishes to be at home at the dinner-table must of course be familiar with the floating gossip of the day, and she should have at least enough knowledge of the talked-of book, the popular play, and the latest operatic success to be able to listen well, with assent or comment at the right point. Her knowledge may be superficial, but it must be ready; and she must be able to comprehend and seize any hint that shows when a fresh topic is coming into the conversation. The really clever dining-out woman goes further, and masters the difficult art of knowing from the way in which the first mention of a topic is received how the different persons involved in the conversation are affected toward it. I



know women who are so acute in this that they can almost divine what will be most agreeable to any hearer, and who can shape their talk accordingly.

No woman can shine at a dinner or in any sort of talk in America to-day who cannot tell a story effectively. I wish I had you in hand. I'd make you tell stories an hour a day, and go over each one again and again till you could tell it well. Abby Tilitson, of whom I wrote you, would take any story she heard and tell it to a cross old aunt she had, and be satisfied with herself only on the rare occasions when she succeeded in making the old cross-patch smile. I know one man in Boston — he is the only man I ever knew on this side of the water who took real pains to be a social success — who told stories into a phonograph until he was satisfied with the way the phonograph gave them back to him. I confess that seems to me going a good deal farther than may be called absolutely necessary, and I have jeered at him, but after all, what is worth doing is said to be worth doing well!

One thing that counts for a good deal in

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social popularity is the art of knowing what to praise at a dinner. Some things are so obvious that everybody is sure to notice them; but almost always there is something that the hostess will be especially pleased to have noticed. Sometimes it is a new dish, sometimes it is the new set of glass just imported, sometimes it is an experiment about which she is a little doubtful. Make it a point to consider what it is wisest to praise, and when and how it is well to speak.

You see that it is no small thing to be an ideal diner-out, but it is really worth while, if one does it well. The art calls for tact, polish, social skill; but as you go on in life, you will find that it is the social game best worth playing.

In all social success the great thing is to consider what is agreeable to others, and so far as is possible, to give it to them. Perfect selfishness and complete altruism, my child, are amazingly near together in the circle of human conduct. — There! If you can do anything better than that in the way of an epigram, air it at your next dinner!

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P. S. If it were not that it would sound vain, I would add that I can hold my own at a dinner reasonably well.

P. P. S. But it has cost me a lot of work.

## XVI

### THE FOLLY OF THE MOMENT

So you wish to know if I think you should play bridge. By all means, my dear; and, my dear, by no means. Before you asked me, I had thought once or twice about giving you the benefit of my opinions on that subject, but I was afraid that I should preach too much. I have so little patience with the people who are making a perfect pest of one of the most delightful things civilization has invented, the blessed art of card-playing, that I hardly know where to begin, and am still less likely to know where to stop. A good series of Lenten lectures might be written on the subject. I am sure it would be a great deal more to the purpose than the course we had last year on "Parallelism in the Prophets." Of course I heard those, but I never knew wherein the prophets were parallel, unless it was in their legs; but anybody could understand

a lecture on the demoralization of playing bridge day after day, morning, noon, and night.

In a social world one must do as her neighbors do; but there are limits to this. I am not bound to be divorced just because I sometimes spend a summer at Newport. I've held my own there pretty well without ever seeing the inside of a divorce-court, though at times I have wondered if I was not in danger of being pointed out on the street for my singularity in that respect. You should know how to play bridge because your world plays it; but you need not on that account become a professional gambler, as are a lot of women I could name.

The way I look at it is this. You should learn to play well enough to take a hand when it is necessary, and to be able to get along without making your partner uncomfortable. Of course you play whist, so this would n't be difficult. You should play when you cannot well avoid it; but if you are wise, you will not go much further. There is much in having your position defined. If you take a stand and

stick to it, people will accept it in a very little while. I don't myself think that it is good form to play tennis on Sunday, but I was entirely in sympathy with George Kirkwood when he inherited the old place at Marmoset. He turned his whole family out to play tennis on Sunday morning the first week he was there, not because he meant to play on that day, but because he did mean to have it understood that he felt that he had a perfect right to do it. The country folk were tremendously scandalized for a fortnight, and after that they accepted anything the Kirkwoods did as a matter of course. They had had their lesson, and understood that he had his own standards and would n't conform to theirs. Just define your position in society, and you may do pretty well what you choose. Let it be known that you can play, but that you do not choose to be considered a devotee of the game. Then you will be allowed to go your own way. You will not be regarded as an obstruction, and you will escape slavery.

You are doubtless reflecting that you won't be invited to bridge-parties. For that you

should give thanks. To get into the bridge-set is to put yourself into a social treadmill. You will have time to do something else, and if you cannot get along without that especial form of feverish dissipation, I'm done with you. Every girl ought to learn cards as part of a rational education, and as a resource for her age; but to make cards the chief business of life is at one fell swoop to sweep away all chance of rational development.

It is to me humiliating, and I am ashamed for my sex, my dear, that so many women who have been intelligent and who have been interesting should have been brought to be idiotic bores by this pestilent vice. They talk of nothing else, apparently they think of nothing else, except bridge — bridge — bridge. They tell you — if you will listen, which I for one will not! — of the hand they held two weeks ago last Thursday, and the luck they had last Friday, and how strange it is that they should have had such good hands in the morning yesterday when in the afternoon and the evening they could n't do anything; and so on and so on, till the chattering of monkeys would be

quite as intelligent, and far more agreeable! Mental vacuity could go very little farther without bringing the whole crew to a mad-house, and I dare say I shall live to see asylums founded for unfortunate women who have frittered away their wits over the bridge-table.

There is another thing. Almost everybody, of course, plays bridge for money, and people who think poker too vulgar and wicked for words gamble at bridge with no compunction whatever. I obstinately refuse. No living mortal can make me feel that gambling is well-bred, and if one returned from the dead to tell me the contrary, I should still hold that it is beneath the dignity of anybody who calls herself a lady. It is bad enough for the men. How do you think any right-minded mother must feel about her son's contracting the gambling habit? It's a hundred times worse for women. In the first place, men seem to be able to gamble and be honest about it, — at least, they say they do. My husband says that to be caught cheating at cards would turn any man out of a gentlemen's club. My dear, I



am ashamed to hear cards mentioned, when I think of the women who are accused of cheating at bridge!

It's like smuggling. I can't for the life of me see why it is any harm to smuggle, except that it would be so horrid to be caught; and Sherman says that's the way women feel about cards. Last week I drove to a bridge-party with Mrs. —, no matter who. I had been dragged in at the last moment to fill a place because somebody was ill, and of course all the regular players had their engagements made. They would hate to play with me because I won't gamble; but as I am very apt to win, — such is luck! — that takes away the sting. Mrs. — talked to me all the way most feelingly on the needs of the church and the necessity of a good spiritual example, — I am really not exaggerating! — so that I was moved almost to tears; and then — twice in the afternoon I saw her deliberately alter the score. Once she put back a card she had actually led from dummy, and said with all the coolness in the world, "I adjust." I was so disgusted that when I got home I declared

that I never saw such an old hypocrite; but Sherman made me think differently. He says she is perfectly sincere, but that she can't see that there is anything morally wrong in cheating at cards. I broke out at him, but he had in five minutes brought me so near to saying that I did n't see anything very bad in fixing over a bridge-score that I stopped with a gasp, and agreed with anything he said. If you ever have a husband that can tangle you up in your own words as mine can me, you will understand that the discussion was not renewed. You think it hateful of him, don't you? It is, my dear; but it is awfully fascinating, the way he does it!

It is stupid to be out of the current, and one hates to be a prig by seeming to pose as a moralist. I generally say simply that I don't know that there's anything wrong in playing for money if anybody chooses, but that I don't wish to do it. Sometimes I say with a little malice that I can't afford to play for money because I cannot afford to lose, but that is when I know those I'm talking to really cannot afford it. The moral hocus-pocus of some

women over the business of taking money is enough to make one dizzy. Why, Mrs. Stanton has made her house into a regular gambling saloon, and a lot of young men who have small salaries have played there in a way that is the scandal of the town; and she is so conscientious that although she allows all this, and lets her stepdaughters take all the stakes they can win from guests that have n't a tenth — or a hundredth, for that matter — of their money, she forbids them to take money from each other! The whole thing is horrid, and as vulgar as it can be!

Not long ago I was in Washington, and I went to a reception at Mrs. Stuart Campbell's. I went to a dinner first, and we arrived about half past eleven. I had been told that all Washington would be there, and I was surprised to find the hostess and twenty people or so, mostly foreign legation folk, sitting starkly in the drawing-room. I did n't in the least understand it, but after a while Mrs. Campbell wanted to show her ballroom to one of the guests, and so she asked those who chose to come along. The room was magnificent;

and after we had seen it, the guest who was being shown about said something about the rest of the house. So we were led on, and presently we came upon a whole suite of card-rooms, and here, Heaven save the mark! was Washington society playing bridge like mad. They looked as though even the intrusion of the hostess was an impertinence, and we did not linger. We were led down a winding stair with an onyx rail, and here was more card-playing, and we were offered whiskey and soda and cigarettes! It made me sick! I am, I suppose, frightfully conservative, and I own to generations and generations of Puritan ancestors that I'm proud of, so perhaps I've no right to say how the whole thing struck me. But at least I thanked Heaven I had no son in that company, and I resented the report the members of the legations might give abroad of Washington receptions.

Now, my dear, this is a sermon and no mistake; but do find something more respectable to do than to help along the bridge-madness. You will get amusement enough without it; and if you can't, I think you had

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better try to make shift with self-respect instead!

P. S. You've never answered my question about the man at the hunt-breakfast. Is he the same one you met in the park?

## XVII

### VULGARITY RAMPANT

OH, my dear goddaughter, I have just come from Barport, and I am simply sick with disgust! I am ashamed to be an American, to be a woman, to be anything that has any relation to the society leaders who have been running after Lord Colcester. The shamelessness of it, and the vulgarity, made me feel that nothing on earth would induce me ever again to speak to any man with a title. It was worse than any tuft-hunting even in England, and I have seen some tall specimens of the sport there.

Lord Colcester's mother and mine were dear friends in their girlhood ages ago, and of course it was natural that he should be civil to me, and that I should like him to be. He is agreeable and polished, too; and I should n't have been human if I had not felt some satisfaction, when all Barport society

was squabbling over him as if he were the prize at a cake-walk, that he should take me out driving. I should n't have been a woman if I had n't put on my very best frock and hat, and been set up; but if you'd seen the way people bowed to me, and smiled at me, and simpered at me, just because I was on the seat of Lord Colchester's trap, you'd have turned cynic on the spot. People I did n't know and would n't know, and for that matter people with so much money that on most occasions they would n't take the trouble to know me, were so super-ecstatically polite that I could have killed them! And killed myself, too, for having to bow, and smile, and simper back!

We met old Mrs. Fitzdagon with jewels all over her carriage-dress, — as I live she had diamonds on her bonnet and all spattered over her; lace-pins as big as nutmegs, and that sort of thing. She was driving in state with her footmen — and handmen, for aught I know; at least she had every kind of an attendant she could think of, and would have added outriders, I've no doubt, if she'd ever heard of them. I've refused to know that woman,

though here and abroad I've met her a dozen times. I could stomach the fact that her father was a barkeeper and her mother a cook, if she were decent; but as it is, I draw the line at Mrs. Fitzdagon, no matter how many millions she has, or what her parties cost. She is not only a vulgar woman, but she is a bad one. I've cut her so brutally I've been ashamed to look in the glass for days, even to see my back-hair, for fear I should meet my own eye!

Well, we met her on the avenue. She put up her lorgnette, — gold, of course, with diamonds stuck on at all possible places! — and when she saw his lordship, she broke into a smile so broad that it stuck out over each side of her landeau. She looked like an enormous Cheshire cat set in diamonds. She did n't know Lord Colcester except by sight, but she bowed to him with as much effusion as if he were her long-lost youth, — to him, mind you, for she looked directly at him, — but she threw a kiss at me! I positively dodged! I felt as if, if that kiss struck me, I should catch some dreadful malady! I was so angry that I could have killed the raddled old thing. I



looked her straight in the face, and cut her absolutely. Now should n't you think that was enough to settle things for any woman, for that day at least? It nearly settled me. I hate to cut anybody. It reminds me of what an old coachman of ours said once about drowning kittens. "If the cat'll have 'em, I've got to drown 'em; but if the old beast knew how I hates the job, she'd stop havin' 'em." It must be a great deal worse to cut a human being than to drown a poor little blind kitten, bad as that must be; and I do think that when I've been through the ghastly business, at least the woman might stay cut. But Mrs. Fitzdagon, not she! Half an hour later we met her again, and if you'll believe it, she stopped us! Stopped us, right there in the middle of the avenue! I really felt myself grow so cold I thought I might faint on the spot; but I held up my head, and looked at her as if I had never seen her before. I did wish I had a lorgnette!

"You don't remember me, I'm afraid," was what she said.

"Really," I said, "I must confess I do not."

It was perfectly brutal, but how could I help it? I could n't have been decent to her, if I had known I was to be shot for not giving in.

"I am Mrs. Reginald Fitzdagon," she remarked.

"Yes?" I said, as if the name conveyed nothing on earth to me.

That stab got through all her diamonds, — and her brass too, for that matter, — and I could see the veins begin to stand out on her forehead. I had not the nerve to keep on, so I said, just as she called me by name, too: "I see you must have mistaken me for somebody else. We will drive on, if you please, Lord Colcester."

What he thought, I haven't an idea. I try to believe he must have sense enough to have taken in the situation; but he may have supposed I was so elated by being seen with him that I would n't acknowledge my best friends. But if he thinks me capable of that, or of having a woman like Mrs. Fitzdagon for a friend, he is welcome to think anything else about me that he chooses. Besides, even if he is a man, and a foreigner who is not supposed to know

American ways, he cannot be so stupid as not to have seen that she was thrusting herself on us just to get an introduction. It was horrid, though. It does seem to me that a thing like that — having to be nasty just for decency's sake, and because one owes it to society — is about the worst social experience one has to go through with. I was so used up by meeting Mrs. Fitzdagon and having to snub her in that way that I had a frightful headache all the rest of the day; and I don't care any more for the old horror than I do for a toad. I really don't! And that is the way we women are made!

And after all, Mrs. Fitzdagon was not much worse than no end of women at Barport who are supposed to be at the head of American society. People who had simply met Lord Colcester at a party, and had not exchanged five words with him, sent him invitations to dinner next day, and overwhelmed him with attentions. Half the time they absolutely ignored the Daltons, with whom he was staying, because the Daltons are not in the smartest of the "smart" set! They have n't a

*divorcée* in the family! He must have been disgusted. A foreigner may feel that he is of a good deal of importance, and yet have only contempt for the people who toady to him too openly. Mrs. Dalton told me that Lord Colcester only said that he had never known "hospitality so pressing"!

Heavens! What a letter I have written; and I only meant to say that I have given Lord Colcester a letter to your people, and that I do hope you will show him that an American girl can be a lady, and not go stick, stark, whirling mad at the sight of a minor member of the British aristocracy. I have written to your father about him, and he will give you particulars.

You may flirt with Lord Colcester all you like, but do snub him a little. It will be good for him, and it will be a change after the way the girls at Barport have fawned on him. I am sure you have too good sense to take an affair of the kind seriously; but snubbing is really the way to impress him!

## XVIII

“AND WOULD MY LADY BE DESIRED ?”

YOU ask me a question, my ingenuous god-child, which goes straight to the heart of the life of every woman that ever was, now is, or ever shall be. I hardly know whether to laugh or to cry at the cool way in which you ask me how a girl attracts a man! Why, you bunch of innocence, — if you're not a mouse of slyness! — the woman who knows that secret may rule the world. I doubt if even she, however, could tell you how she did it. Cleopatra might give you a course of intimate lectures on the subject, and explain to you the whole bag of tricks, — that's slang, my dear; never under any circumstances use slang, it is so unladylike for a goddaughter! — but when the old Serpent of the Nile had told you exactly how she beguiled Antony, she would n't have touched the heart of the matter. You or I or anybody else who tried the same methods simply would n't arrive.

The secret certainly is too elusive to be put into words, and I have the strongest doubts whether it is to be mastered by study. It is like genius, it is born in a woman or she goes without it; for that matter, it is genius, if there is such a thing in this incomprehensible world. Nature makes some women with a quality that attracts men as catnip attracts cats. The most absolutely woodeny men alive used to prick up their ears and sniff with their nostrils the moment Adelaide Trent came in sight, and she was as homely as a calico doll. Other women are better and sweeter and nobler, are more beautiful, more witty, and every creature of their own sex knows they are worth dozens of the fascinators; but they no more have the power of getting hold of masculine heartstrings than heliotrope or mignonette of enchanting the senses of the tabbies and tommies of the back alleys. How do they do it? My dear, the hope of finding out is one of the few things that reconciles me to the Day of Judgment.

Though neither I nor any other live mortal can tell you the secret, however, every woman

has her theories, and some things bearing on the subject are worthy of your consideration. My friend Mrs. Toinbee used to say that she would make any girl a success with the men, who would follow her directions. She declared that she did n't care if the girl was poor and ugly and dull; she was sure she could manage, if only her rules were followed. I told her once that she was pretending to nothing less than omnipotence; and she flashed back: "Oh, no: I'm only pretending to understand something about the simplest animals in creation, the men." She was not so far from right about the men. They are simple because you can, if you are clever enough, reason out what a man will do; but nobody could tell about a woman.

Of course I don't for a minute believe Mrs. Toinbee was entirely right, but although she was extravagant, there was a lot of sense in her ideas. She believed that the chief thing is to pique a man into thinking that he is of no consequence to a girl, and so work on his vanity. She was always saying that the girls make themselves too cheap, and that any one of

them who held herself dear was sure to be sought after. The truth is, that the modern young man is so spoiled that nothing can be predicted of him with any certainty except that he will assume that he is adorable, and that he will expect adoration accordingly. The way in which boys are pampered nowadays, and the way they have of seeming to bestow an honor on a girl if they look at her, makes my blood boil! It is the girls' fault, too. They have very largely made themselves, with their mannish ways, their slang, their strenuousness, their golf, and all the rest of it, a sort of pale and poor imitation of their brothers. Any wholesome boy finds it better fun to associate with a real fellow than with a bad imitation in petticoats, and so at balls you see whole tables full of young men, while the host is scurrying about trying to get supper-partners for stray young women; you see the matrons of the dancing-classes having constantly to send into the dressing-rooms to rout out the boys, who had rather get together and smoke and talk than to chat and dance with the girls. They are entirely right. I am sure that



if I were a boy, I'd much rather go with my kind than with the masculine girls of the day.

If I get off upon a discussion of the modern girl, however, there is no knowing where I may bring up; and it is perhaps better to come back to Mrs. Toinbee and her theory that the way to gain the attention of a young gentleman is to snub him judiciously. I said something of the sort to you in a letter a little while ago, and I don't wish to repeat myself; but her words are worth quoting. "If a girl will only be difficult," she used to say, "the men will run after her fast enough. They'll take without a 'thank you' all the favors of a bud that is fool enough to let them see she is flattered by their notice; and they will be convinced that the obligation is all on her side. A man never really cares for a woman who shows that she is grateful to him for noticing her; and as for the woman who all but asks him to attend to her, he is sure in the end to despise her. That's the way the world is made."

No generality is without its exceptions; and you are too young to see the full force of Mrs.

Toinbee's wisdom. I do hope, however, that you will get it into your head that it is your business to impress on every man who comes in your way that you honor him by accepting his homage. I wrote you of the Southern girl who has been here this winter. She was a living proof of the fact that if you will condescend to the men, they will inevitably believe you are above them, and thereby desirable. Men and women never met on an equal footing yet, except when they were still in love after years of married life, — and perhaps not even then! One or the other will inevitably take the attitude of bestowing, and if you want to hold a man, you must insist upon being the one who graciously gives. That is my interpretation of "She Stoops to Conquer." If you accept a flower or bestow a dance, let the man feel that the chances were strongly against your doing either, and that he may bless his lucky stars for your being willing to favor him.

I was so exasperated not long ago, when I had to chaperon Alice Carthuen at the Trefethern ball, that I could have fallen upon her

and shaken her. She is as pretty as a rose, and her frock was perfectly wonderful, the loveliest shade of pale blue, with the tiniest silver spangles in it as thick as they could be, and the most enchanting curly ruffles round the bottom of the skirt coming up in the most deliciously unexpected sort of curves; her mother had her dresses made in Paris, and Lily Carthuen — she was Lily Kent; we used to make mud pies together in the Public Garden — always did have wonderful taste in dress. But Alice — I have lost my place somehow; but what I wanted to say was that Alice, though of one of the best families, with no end of money, and all the rest of it, was so humble that it was pitiful. If a man asked her to dance, she had the air of being as grateful as if he'd given her his last crust to save her from starvation! It was perfectly maddening to sit there and see her!

Then in the cotillion that girl was a sight to make angels weep. What boys do you think she took out? Why, simply those that everybody else was after. She had n't an idea in her head except to follow the others, and to help

pamper the conceited fools who thought they were so irresistible that of course every girl was after them. If she had only had the wit to slight them entirely, they'd have noticed; she might have trusted their vanity for that. As it was, she was only one of a crowd. She had n't a partner who had n't a lordly air of expecting attention, and of conferring honor by accepting the favor she handed him. I think I really might have shaken her, if it had n't been that I knew she'd come out of her frock. I was just behind her, and I tried to make her take out some of the really nice boys that don't happen to be the fashion in her set; but she only looked surprised, and said: "Why, anybody could get him." The stupidity of it was beyond anything. Instead of making her favors tell by giving them to boys who were really capital fellows and who would have been grateful, she wasted her whole evening, and went home without having made a real impression upon any human being except myself, — and my impression came from my indignation.

You will easily believe that I read Alice a

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lesson over that dance, but I probably had no effect upon her. She cannot understand that of course a man, and especially the modern young man, thinks he is conferring a favor if he asks a girl to dance. What he needs is to have his vanity snubbed and his conceit taken down a peg. He will remember the girl who does it, and he will be very likely to set himself to work to prove that he is really irresistible by bringing her to his feet. Then she has her opportunity.

But I have not time for a single word more to-night. I must go and dress.

P. S. You need n't ignore my questions about that mysterious man. It only makes me suspicious. I may remind you that I have other correspondents beside yourself.

## XIX

### "MOST RARE IS MOST DESIRED"

THIS letter should be headed like the chapters in the old-fashioned stories: "The same subject continued." I was just in the middle of what I had to say: at least, I had n't said half I intended. I was so full of what I had been writing that I brought the subject up that night at a dinner, and after we left the men, we women talked about it. The thing they insisted upon was that it was all very well for a girl who had a lot of attention to take on airs, but that if she was neglected, she could n't begin. I said this was all nonsense.

Then Mrs. Tavish said that of course every girl had some partners, and that I was right. The thing was for her not to act as if she was surprised to be asked.

"Don't you know," she went on, "the detestable, grateful way some girls have of

receiving the smallest attention? Of course the men hate it. I should, if I were a man."

"I'm not sure that the men feel that way about it," Mrs. Manners observed, — she has a cool, deliberate way of speaking that always gives a peculiar flavor to whatever she says, — "I think the men are flattered by that sort of thing. The point is, that they get so much of that sort of flattery, they cease to care for it. They really like a *sauce piquante* better."

Of course it is very easy — and very detestable — to go to the other extreme. There is nothing more hateful than the modern type of girl, who is coarsely buoyant and mannish, and who tries to treat the men, poor idiot, as if she were one of themselves. She fools nobody but herself. The men are not taken in, and all her airs of accepting favors as a matter of course between comrades are too evidently nonsense to deceive anybody, — least of all the men. Between men and women in society nothing of this sort is possible, except in the exceedingly rare cases where especial circumstances and unusual temperaments make a

platonic comradeship; — and even then I don't believe it is real. No woman thinks a platonic friendship possible except for herself. She knows that between a man and any other woman it is a sham, and as I always frankly went in for a flirtation or nothing, I have no illusions in the line of a man and a woman's being good fellows together. Men know what such pretences are worth, and either think the woman who believes in them is a fool, or that she is trying to fool them. It is better, even in these strong-minded days, to be limp and clinging than mannish — when it comes to getting a husband. The limp girl at least appeals to a man's chivalry and to his vanity, and if she is like wet paper, she is much more apt to stick. The mannish girl gets married, of course; but she generally takes up with the dull, horsey man, and she is rather apt to stop at the divorce-court as one of the stations of her way through life.

The thing I am advising is not haughtiness; still less is it snubbing. It is a simple, sweet, but absolutely unfailing recognition of the superiority of your sex. Be as agreeable as you



know how to be, my dear ; be as flexible as good breeding will let you be ; never be snobbish, and never snub anybody unless you are absolutely forced to it, — but never for one moment, asleep or awake, fail to keep in mind that you are bound — until you marry! — to insist upon the absolute superiority of your sex. Never say it ; just live it. Make it a sort of atmosphere about you. Naturally, if you play your part so poorly as to make this seem like personal pride, you will be misunderstood, and perhaps to a certain extent disliked ; but even in that case, your smiles will be of double worth where you do give them. I should hate to have you proud, and a hundred times worse should I hate to have you seem proud in any snobbish way ; but you are bound to uphold the pride of your sex. You have a moral duty to perform in impressing on a generation of puffed-up and willful young men the fact of their inferiority. Keep this in mind, — gently and sweetly, but firmly.

If you can carry this out successfully, you will know the supreme satisfaction of having achieved a great ethical triumph, which is n't

a great deal to a girl in itself ; and also — what is of the greatest possible consequence, — of having, by means of achieving it, been a tremendous social success.

You come back in your own mind, I dare say, to the thing Mrs. Caldwell kept getting back to in that talk the other night.

“Yes; but how do you begin?” she kept asking. “A girl can’t condescend to a man when he does n’t look at her, or come her way. He would n’t know it if she did.”

This is more of an objection in theory than it really is in practice. Every girl of decent position must have some attention. If she has any friends, they must give her dinners, and at balls she must at any rate be taken out now and then by the men that know her people, that have had her for a dinner-partner, and so on. The point is, that she should, if she has to sit alone, cultivate the art of seeming to be perfectly contented; that she should give the one only dance she has a chance to give in an evening, poor thing, as if she half wondered whether she should be so good-natured as to do it. If she sits openly beseeching with her

eyes every man that goes past her to come and take her out, and if when one stops she greets him with the grateful fervor of Andromeda welcoming What's-his-name when he appeared just in time to save her from being crunched into lamb chops by the dragon, then the whole situation is lost. The man goes away with the feeling of having been a magnificent benefactor, and the conviction that he has done his whole duty for a good long time. He is n't running after that girl very soon, you may be sure.

The modern fashion of dividing dances I suppose it is of no use for me to say anything about. It is thoroughly vulgar; it has no possible excuse, except that it gives the popular girls a chance to show off; and it cannot last very long. If I were a man, I would have a whole dance, or I would let a girl alone; but the fact that men will fight for a little scrap illustrates what I've been saying. The only reason men will go in for it is for the sake of being able to swagger as one of the half dozen among whom a waltz was divided, just as the girl finds her pleasure in being able to say

she had n't a dance that was n't all chopped up, she was so sought after. You must do as the "lave" do, I suppose; for you probably have n't the moral courage to declare that you won't divide your dances.

You said in your last that the trouble with my advice is that it would take a girl just like me to follow it. Perhaps; but at least you can't say — I thank Heaven I've a clear record to prove it! — that I'm preaching things that I have not proved are compatible with pretty shining social success! It is n't vanity any more for me to say this, for I've owned that I'm a dowager.

My husband has undertaken to criticise my letters. He saw me writing one, and noticed how long it was, and began to make remarks. I gave it to him to read, to keep him still. He followed the usual irritating masculine fashion of saying nothing for a while. Men try to make us think they are considering whether we could understand their comments, when really they are trying hard to think of something to say. To-day, when he

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saw me writing again, he said: "I thought you were a cleverer woman." He got his rise, of course, for I asked what he meant. "I thought you knew that no woman ever wanted to have advice thrust on her," he said. I looked at him in a way that might mean anything, because of course it really did mean nothing. "I thought you were a cleverer man," I said at last. "As how?" he asked, rising beautifully in his turn. "I thought you knew," I answered, "that at least every woman likes to give advice. I am giving it." I shan't let him see any more of the letters. You need n't be afraid. I know you would n't feel like following what I said, if you thought a man had read it.

## XX

### PLAYING THE SOCIAL GAME

I HOPE that in my last I did not give you the impression that social success depends upon the men. That is nonsense. It is all very well for a woman to be popular with the men, and that is what we all hope for; but if women don't make a girl a success, the rest counts for little. Women are bound to take up a girl that men admire, and she has to be invited about; but after all, the women arbitrate. The men do not even, I believe, decide what girls they will admire most. Once in a while a woman has a power of making every man run after her, and she'd rather have that than social success; but social success it is not, nor does it lead to it. Women make society, keep it going, and it would be hard indeed if they could not have the final voice in regard to who shall succeed.

Keep on the right side of the women, my

dear goddaughter, and especially of the women of my age. It is well, and it is above all graceful, to be nice to the old women; but it is n't their opinion that counts most. The opinion of the middle-aged woman is the voice of society, — and indeed it is the voice of the world. The mothers of the buds are the ones for you to consider. If you win them, your position is established; and what you cannot realize is the fact that they will do you more good with the men than any other thing. What you want is that the mother of every bud shall regard you as the *débutante* of the season who is second only to her own daughter. You can't expect anything more. Indeed, if a woman thinks you outdo her own, she will instinctively be against you. The most humble-bee-dumble-dee woman — as we used to say — will not set you above her daughter, but you should try to have her put you next. There is some sort of a story or other about somebody who achieved something tremendous simply because he was the second choice of everybody. Lay the moral of that instructive fable to heart.

It is the mothers of the buds who have decided whether you should be admitted to the dancing-classes before you were out; and they have discussed you so thoroughly, my dear, that if political candidates could be half as well analyzed, government would be revolutionized. They settle who shall be the guests at dinners, — the real dinners that count; they decide all sorts of social questions. They even do most of the selecting when the men give theatre-parties or coaching-parties; and so on through the whole chapter. Do you suppose a man gives parties for girls that the ladies of authority choose to be a little difficult about chaperoning?

To propitiate the mothers is n't so difficult, if you will only keep it in mind that it is worth your while to be nice. It is somewhat harder than it sounds, but it is simple. It takes thought and care to improve the little opportunities of making a good impression. On the surface it is part of your business to see when the fan or the handkerchief drops, and if there is no man to do it, to pick it up. You are to see — quietly and not aggressively, for we women



do hate to be fussed over; it calls attention to the fact that we are beginning to be old enough for such things to be of importance to us! — about seats and draughts and cushions and shawls. It comes down in the ultimate analysis to being thoughtful about what the mothers will like. The world of middle-aged women, my dear, is the touchstone of your power of acting unselfishly; and in this case unselfishly means wisely.

You will not, no matter how well you carry out all the advice I could give you, be likely to reap a reward so substantial as that which fell to Kate Stanford. Old Mrs. Pepperell, who was n't a relative at all, and who knew Kate only as a girl visiting at the house, left her \$10,000, because, she said in her will, Kate was the only one of the young girls who came there who had always been courteous to her. Of course she was an old lady, and Kate was the friend of her granddaughter, so the case is n't exactly the same; but the rewards you may win are not the less valuable because they are less tangible.

But think, my dear, of all that was implied

in this bequest. The girls that old Mrs. Pepperell saw were of good families; they were not ill-natured, they were just thoughtless. They would have been utterly amazed at the idea of being considered in the slightest degree ill-bred; and yet they seemed to a lady of the old school lacking in courtesy. It is all very well to say that Mrs. Pepperell was an old foggy; that nowadays nobody expects any of the antiquated, elaborate consideration for age. The fact remains that the old-fashioned ways produce the effect of sweetness, of race, of polish, in a way that nothing else can. You may get along without it; but you can win much by giving this effect.

Young people are continually, generation after generation, I suppose, holding that if their own set approve of their ways, nothing else matters. It is the question of judgment by peers of which I wrote awhile ago; but it fails because the younger set never really rules the social world. At a ball in Baltimore I once saw a young girl do something so rude that an old gentleman, a friend of her father and her grandfather, took her to task for it. She de-

clared that she had acted as would any girl of her set under the given circumstances; and in the end told him that all she wanted was to be approved by those of her own kind. "Very good," rejoined the old gentleman. "I once tried to make a young pickpocket see how his theft looked to me, and he told me that, anyway, his pals said he had done a first-class job. I am sorry you prefer the verdict of your pals to that of their betters." He was right, too; there is a court of appeal — socially, I mean; I am not moralizing! — higher than your "pals."

What will count most with the mothers, more than what you do for them, is the way you treat their daughters. We are selfish and worldly old things, no doubt; but we do think more of what happens to our children — unless we are abandoned divorce-court females, who ought not to count as women at all! — than we do of what happens to ourselves. The most worldly mother has some maternal softness in her heart; or if she is too hardened for that, at least she has in her selfish old bosom maternal pride. If she does not really care for

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her daughter, she will at least watch her as a gambler watches his stake on the green table, and she keenly appreciates every turn of the wheel. Be kind to your sister buds from generosity, if you can, — I am, after all, your godmother, and am bound now and then to put in something moral! — but if you cannot, at least be kind to them as a matter of policy. Don't patronize, don't be greedy, don't take a man away from a girl unless you are really forced to it, — and then never, never attempt it unless you are sure, and three times sure, of succeeding! If you are nice to the daughters, you will find little difficulty in winning the mothers.

You see that it becomes a sort of point of honor with any decent woman to help the girl that is good to her daughter. Women have n't as a rule much common honesty, perhaps; but they pretty generally have an unwritten code in things of a certain sort. It's a feminine code, as my husband is altogether too fond of reminding me; but I tell him that that is just what makes it hold so fast when it does hold. If a woman wants a man herself, she'll take

him if she can get him; for surely that's right enough, as anybody but a man could see. Outside of this, however, women with any antecedents — and for that matter, I rather fancy women without antecedents, too — are instinctively punctilious about paying favors in kind. A woman's sense of honor naturally has n't, as a rule, much to do with anything but the morals of love; there's no reason that it should have; but where it applies, it may be counted on about as safely as any other earthly thing.

I'm speaking chiefly of women with traditions. There are plenty of piggesses in the world, just as there are plenty of pigs. We are the daughters of men, and therefore cannot reasonably be expected to be perfect. The vulgar woman is a hundred times worse in society than the vulgar man, because it is especially the function of women to keep society going. A social caddess has more chance to be obnoxious than a cad has.

You see my chief point is that the great thing to remember is that real social success depends upon the middle-aged women. You

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may not believe it, and naturally the young matrons, who are just beginning to feel their responsibilities because they are coming to have some little voice in managing the dancing-classes, would tell you I am all wrong. They think they are ruling, just because they are being allowed to begin to learn their social duties. I am trying to make you wise by letting you into the real secret. These young matrons, headstrong as they sometimes are, self-complacent as they are almost sure to be, take their leads from their elders. They can't get on without direction. The middle-aged are really managing.

That lace I sent you Christmas is fifteenth century Venetian. If you abuse it, I'll never speak to you again. No girl of your age knows how to take care of lace, and you'd better put it away for ten years.

P. S. I am not trying to pry into your affairs, as you hint, although you are too polite to say so. I have never asked a soul about you. Some people have told me things without my

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asking. When you have lived longer in the world, you will know that you cannot think without its being known to somebody. Indeed, very often people know what a girl does n't know about her own thoughts, because she won't confess them to herself.

## XXI

### LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION

I AM very sorry to deny a request of yours, but about letters of introduction I have a fixed rule, which I never under any circumstances break over. I cannot give you the letter for Mrs. Elton to Lady Graylawn because I do not personally know your friend; and I never, never, never give a letter to any human being unless the bearer is really an acquaintance, and a tried one at that. I hope you have n't told Mrs. Elton you would ask me, for I should hate to make it uncomfortable for you, but I cannot go against my principles. You may think I bristle with principles as a porcupine bristles with quills, but I am too old to change now; especially as I think I am right.

I know all you will say, or rather all you will think, for you are too courteous to say it, even to a crotchety old godmother. You will feel as if I had insulted you by doubting your judg-



ment or your honesty; you will be angry or hurt, as your mood happens to be, and wonder that I could n't do so small a thing as this for you. But, my dear child, is it a small thing? Is the principle which pricks your fingers like the quill of an ill-natured old hedgehog really of so little consequence? Have a little patience with an old-fashioned but well-meaning woman, and hear me in my own defense.

A letter of introduction is a demand upon the friendship of the person to whom it is sent. It calls on that person to extend to a stranger certain consideration in the name of her friendship for you; it is really asking a favor on the ground of her regard. You ask in the name of friendship, and I hold that in the spirit of friendship you are on your honor bound not to abuse the privilege. You are even on your honor bound to be especially careful not to run any possible risk of mistake. I go so far that I do not personally feel it right to give a letter unless I am convinced it will result in pleasure to the receiver as well as to the bearer. Heaven forbid that I should ever have to suspect myself of making a conven-

ience of my friends; and that is what letters of introduction too often mean. Certainly it is not too much to say that it is my plain duty to be thoroughly assured that the acquaintance-ship I am the means of bringing about will not result in the inconvenience or in the discomfort of one I call my friend.

An introduction that comes to me from any one who has a right to send it, I regard as a claim which it is impossible to ignore or to slight. To refuse to honor it would be to deny friendship for the sender. Indeed, it would be worse than that: it would be a deliberate insult, because it would be equivalent to declaring that the one who has given the note has acted dishonestly, and has been guilty of trying to get social consideration on false pretenses. There are cases enough where this is true; but if the letter is written by anybody whose claim I recognize, I should feel that I was doing a mean and despicable thing if I shirked its demand. I am more bound to do what I can for the bearer than I should be for my friend in person, for I am put on my honor.

Because I look at the matter in this way, I naturally assume that other people have a right to take the same ground; and I never give a letter except in cases where I feel entirely justified in demanding all that is implied by the strictest construction of my own interpretation of the obligation. In the first place, the person to whom I give a letter must be a personal friend; in the second, it must seem to me, as I just said, that the acquaintance I propose is likely to be agreeable to both sides; and in the third, I must be confident that my own friendship and standing with the person addressed fully justify my taking what in any one not a real friend would be an unwarrantable liberty. I look on an introduction as a debt of honor; I should feel that I had no choice but to drop the acquaintance of any person who refused freely and fully to respond to a letter which I had given, and I never mean to put myself in the false position of not being justified in taking this view.

I am not, of course, speaking of such introductions as have to do with business of any kind. They carry their own explanation, and

are no more matters of social import than any other business transaction. Men, I suppose, have to give and receive a good many of this sort, and now that women are so mixed up with public affairs, the same is more or less true of them. It is naturally not in my way to have much to do with such epistles, but if by any chance I am called upon to give one, I try to be just as careful, as far as I am responsible.

The carelessness and the recklessness with which many people give letters of introduction seems to me shocking. Often, I suppose, sheer cowardice is at the bottom of the whole matter. An impudent woman or a young man with little sensitiveness demands an introduction to some desirable person in another city or abroad, and the woman who is asked seldom has courage to refuse, no matter how much she wishes to get out of it. Mrs. Percivale complained to me bitterly the other day that Mrs. Morrelle had got from her letters to two or three of her best friends in London; and when I asked why she gave them, she could only say with tears in her eyes: "Oh, I don't know! I just did n't have the backbone to

refuse; and the people Mrs. Morrelle insisted most on having letters to are the very ones I hated most to send her to. Lady Nairne will never forgive me. Oh, I do wish I had your independence of character!" I told her it was n't a question of independence of character at all with me, but of moral principle. You can see easily enough that the persons who, like Mrs. Morrelle, are least deserving of such favors are sure to be the ones most brazen in demanding them; and I think it is a moral duty to stand out against them. Somebody has got to protect society; at least it is a duty to protect one's friends.

More than once I have had confidential notes telling me not to bother about people who were coming to me with letters; and saying that the introductions had been given under compulsion, but really meant nothing. Think how unworthy and degrading that sort of thing is! One may stop payment of a stolen check, but to give a check and then secretly to make it worthless seems to me one of the meanest forms of dishonesty. I am happy to say that nobody has ever taken back a letter in

this way who was really on terms of friendship with me that justified the making of the claim on me in the first place. I should be sorry to have a friend who had not the courage to be more honest than that.

One naturally sends a private letter when one gives an introduction, but that is to explain, and to make things easier for both bearer and receiver by telling who and what the stranger is. To get an introduction with no clue to the identity of the person presenting it is so perplexing that I always wish to spare my friends such an annoyance; but openly to give a card and then secretly to discredit it seems to me absolutely impossible to a lady.

The English are rather worse, I believe, in the matter of giving introductions than we are, though I fancy they are less free with their own countrymen than they are with us. They do give letters to Americans with an amazing freedom. I once received a letter introducing a lady and her daughter, — both of whom, moreover, kindly offered to come into the country and stay with me for a month without being asked, — and the writer was a London

woman, who had to remind me that she had seen me at a dinner, and to add: "Though as I was so unfortunate as not to speak with you, I fear you may not remember me clearly." This was an extreme case, but Mrs. Page Burton declared with every appearance of seriousness that a man once presented himself at her house with a warm note from an English lady who "felt she knew her" because her "trusted maid" had once lived with Mrs. Burton, and spoke of her so highly. Mrs. Burton said she was so flattered to be well spoken of by a "trusted maid" that she immediately asked the bearer of the note to dine. The tale does not sound entirely probable, but sometimes I think so many extraordinary things are true in social life that I shall have to adopt as my motto the old profession of faith, and to say of every incredible story: "I believe because it is impossible."

What to do in case a letter of introduction is written by one who has no right to give it is one of the hardest of social problems. In theory, the proper thing is to treat it like a forged check, and to refuse to honor it. Prac-

tically, the matter is n't so simple. The note may be presented by a person entirely ignorant of the fraudulent nature of the document, and wholly innocent of any wrong intention. Plenty of social boasters offer letters to important people they have met by chance, and hope by this means to pass as friends of the notables addressed. For the receiver to snub the unwary who take such introductions is of course sometimes necessary, but it is pretty hard on the innocent, if foolish, victims of the self-advertisers. We ordinary mortals are seldom called upon to be very harsh; and in fact I have n't the strength of mind to be. Once or twice in my life I have had to say plainly that I did not know the writers of letters, but generally the worst that comes to us may be got over by a little tact. A little evasion — not pleasant, perhaps, but humane — is sufficient. When I get one of these fraudulent introductions, I try at once to find out something about the bearer, and to receive her or drop her on her own merits. You can generally tell in a single interview. If it is possible to hear from the person's home, the matter is much



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more simple ; but I refuse to stand sponsor for any person about whom I am not well assured. It is not fair to the people who have faith in me, and might be dragged into unpleasant complications through my ignorance.

This is all in the nature of an apology for refusing what you asked of me; and if it does not make you feel that I am right, I am sure that its very length and awful solemnity will prevent you from doing the like again. Only don't bear malice, my dear, whatever you do.

## XXII

### THE HUSBANDRY OF FAMILY TREES

CERTAINLY I know whom your cousin Horace married; she was a Miss Julia Wainwright, of Wilmington. Her mother was a Sprague; one of the Fisher Spragues. A sister of Julia married Thatcher Blake, of Boston. They lived for a long time on Beacon Street opposite the Common, and then went to Florence. I never saw Horace's wife, but she was a beauty, and had a great fortune. They had three children, and the oldest daughter is the one that is engaged to Count de Practique.

There! I could tell you a lot more of the same sort, but this is all you will have patience to read, and I dare say it is more than you will take the trouble to remember. You say I am a walking genealogical gazetteer, and mean it as a half-humorous fling. It is really a compliment, if you only knew it; and when you go on to add that nobody in your generation

pays any attention to genealogy, you are casting a reproach on your contemporaries.

Nothing could be more stupid than a person who knows nothing but genealogies. Old Peter Marengy, for instance, drives me to distraction by the way in which he starts out at the mention of anybody's name, and fairly drowns you in a flood of information about the person's connections, relatives, grandmothers, cousins, and all the rest of it. He interrupts any story to tell who the grandmother of the hero was, or whom the great-aunt of the heroine married; and is more tedious than tongue can tell. On the other hand, nobody can be said to be up to the requirements of good society who does not know about the relationships of the people in her own set, and still more the connections of her own family. Not to know about one's relatives always had for me a little flavor of the not entirely reputable!

Just now there is a good deal of a fashion of having the family line looked up by professional genealogists, often from the desire of people of antecedents not socially of the best to establish a family tree up which they may

climb into some one of the orders of the day, — Dames, or Daughters, or Granddaughters, or that sort of thing, of which I have already given you my opinion. This is well enough, although it has given the whole business a rather cheap air; but in any case, this is not what I should mean when I say a society woman must know about genealogies. These people seldom know anything about their ancestors after they have been provided with the record. They keep it as a book, and treat it somewhat in the spirit of the man who had a prayer printed, and every night on going to bed waved his arm toward it, and remarked: "Those are my sentiments, Lord." They refer to the printed account as establishing, by the very fact that it is printed, their claim to be considered of proper lineage. In many cases there is nothing in particular to be said for their forbears except that they were decent and commonplace mortals; but as only the shallowest vanity is generally concerned in getting up the genealogy at all, a mere list of names does as well as anything else.

I like to have a person interested in ances-

tors because they were hers or his; because what our life is, is so tied up with what they were. If one is not interested, I have no quarrel with her; only such an interest appeals to me. The thing that concerns us socially, however, is another matter altogether. A family genealogy is a personal interest, and at best a thing of personal pride. I think that in the give and take of social life we should make some effort to know about other people. On the face of it, this spares us no end of dangerous slips. Sometimes it seems to me that a telepathic influence moves us to say to people precisely those things which should be left rigorously unsaid, and if we know of no definite reason for keeping quiet, out they come. John Colburt took Mrs. Amy Houghton in to dinner once, and just because he did not know that she was the granddaughter of Professor Canton, who murdered Dr. Winchester, began out of a clear sky to talk to her about "the famous Canton-Winchester murder." Another time at dinner I overheard a man ask a lady if she had ever seen so and so, the great embezzler who shot himself, and heard her

answer: "He was my father, sir." I told you a lot of these stories in one of my letters, and I could add others. Any man or woman who goes into decent society is as inexcusable for making such cruel blunders as he would be for wiping his boots on a lady's frock. Women are not so often caught in such a trap as men; though when they do make a blunder, it is sure to be quite as bad. A general knowledge of family relations is needed at every dinner or other function. The well-bred person naturally avoids doubtful topics unless completely sure of the ground; but when a stupid member of the company blunders into a mess, one should know how to help to make matters right, or at least to keep out of the awkwardness one's self.

There are a thousand ways in which it is convenient to know what are the antecedents and relations of the persons one associates with. In Boston to-day it is safe to assume that everybody is related to everybody else, just as in New York it is fairly near to the truth to take it for granted that in any company will be prominent people who are inter-

ested in their genealogy only to the extent of wishing to conceal it. In either case the assumption does fairly well, and either proposition, taken as a general truth, tells you what to avoid. Sooner or later, however, an occasion is sure to arise when no general proposition, but only specific knowledge, will avail; and to be prepared for that chance I make it my business to have a fair knowledge of family relations.

In regard to one's own family, if your ancestors have been respectable folk, it is certainly well to know it. Silly and shoddy people make, and always will make, absurd pretensions, and fictitious pedigrees will be manufactured to the end of time; but I believe in a wholesome pride of race. Do you suppose it has done me anything but good to know that my grandfather was called on the bench "Incorruptible Tom," or that my great-uncle — he was the elder brother of great-aunt Tabitha, peace to her ashes! — stood up like a man and was shot in cold blood, rather than betray a trust? I am even sure that I am none the worse for being aware that my mother

opened a ball with the Grand Duke Axel, and that Talleyrand pronounced my great-grandmother the most beautiful and accomplished woman he met in America. To know that one is descended from right-minded, honorable people is surely a strong incentive to be as decent as one is capable of being; and I confess that, personally, I find the reputation of my mother and my grandmothers for breeding and womanliness and accomplishments a vigorous tonic whenever I am tempted to give up effort to keep as nearly as possible to their standard.

There is a good deal more to the matter, too, if I were only clever enough to express it. I have a deal of faith in the moral effect of proper family pride and respect for blood on the community as well as on individuals. It is easy enough to find degenerates who come of good people and who disgrace every tie; but on the whole, I am sure a sense of dignity helps a person to behave well. To be responsible to anything is a moral restraint, and a sense of coming of fine or even of merely highly placed ancestors must help one to keep



out of the worst sorts of evil ways.. Professor Wodteling told me once that the most moral races are those who practice ancestor-worship; and while I don't know whether he was right or not, I can see why he might be. If he is, it seems to me that to pay a proper attention and respect to genealogy is indirectly a help to public morals. It is supporting the traditions which on the whole make for general morality.

It should not be necessary for me to explain that I do not mean the sort of ancestor-glorification which consists in flaunting a pedigree in the face of the world just out of vanity. The person who claims consideration on the strength of being well-descended is really setting up a claim to superiority which he or she should be forced to make good; is really asking to be judged by a standard higher than that applied to common mortals. If he has nothing in himself to entitle him to especial respect, he is thereby proved to be not above, but below, his neighbors. Family tradition that ministers only to pride and vainglory is about the most contemptible sort of caddishness I know.

This is tremendously didactic, and solemn enough to have been written by great-aunt Tabitha herself. I am really serious, however, in spite of the fact that I seem to be trying to make a Lenten sermon. My forbears are very real and human to me, and I have always had a most friendly interest in them.

It is a pity our knowledge of our ancestors cannot include more particulars of their little peculiarities and human weaknesses. Our sense of humor would then be called to subdue our vanity, and help to keep us in a rational frame of mind. We know of the good deeds of those old men and women, — that is, if we know anything in particular. If one has been too notorious a rascal, we may hear of that; but in general, the ancestors are shadowy abstractions. What I wish we knew is the sort of story that in our family used to be told of a cousin who died before I was born. He was a bachelor, and father once remarked that Hollis could never marry because he could never think a woman good enough to be honored with his preference. He was very vain, and sported an enormous pair of those

horrid long side-whiskers, "weepers," that are absolutely the most detestable form in which a man is able to disfigure his face with hair. Great aunt Tabby, who dealt fairly with all the family by making herself disagreeable to everybody, never lost a chance to tell cousin Hollis that his whiskers were hideous; and she always wound up her unflattering remarks by saying: "Think how those whiskers will look in your coffin, when they're all slumped down!" She repeated this so often, and apparently with such grewsome unction, that persecuted and inordinately vain cousin Hollis was driven to despair by the image of his dead face which her words conjured up. He went to the length of putting in his will explicit directions that nobody should be permitted to see him in his coffin; and I suppose died with a mind relieved of the horrid fear aunt Tabby had held over him. The irony of it, or the joke of it, was, — if it is proper to speak of anything connected with such a subject as a joke, — that his will was n't even read until after the funeral, and all the relatives had viewed the remains, according to the cheerful

fashion of those days. And it is recorded that aunt Tabby, when she looked down upon the dead, set her lips together, and nodded her head, as much as to say: "Yes; just as I said."

I should like to know all sorts of human anecdotes about my forbears, of the same intimate kind, so that I could make them seem as human and as flesh-and-bloodsy as possible. Then, when I thought of their nobility of mind and purpose, I could not but feel as if what they did I might do. They would be closer to me than any person can be who has gone so far down the "corridor of time" that all we can see is the shape of a figure, with perhaps a gleam of a halo by way of distinction.

It is sometimes of a good deal of value, in coming to a conclusion about the character of a man, to know about his people. Before you are too entirely carried off your feet about any man to reason clearly, you will do well to find out, if you can, what his family is like. A family must have its characteristics. There are always traits that are practically sure to come out in every member of a clan, faintly in some, and well marked in others, but sure to

be there. Every family has its character as truly as every individual; and while it would be foolish to judge a person entirely by his people, or indeed chiefly by them, it is more foolish to attempt to estimate him fully and fairly without taking his race into account. If you should ever think of marrying a man, do try to hold yourself in hand until you have made him talk about his family, and until you have heard others, who really know, discuss it too. This last is not always possible; but the first is, and should never be neglected. If you are even considering the possibility of merging yourself in a clan, you should know what that clan is; and you cannot in any other way judge of a certain side of the man himself.

I hope it will not shock you if I add that every woman is morally bound to consider what sort of an ancestry she is providing for her possible children.

## XXIII

### A DISCOURSE ON SNOBBERY

WHAT is a snob? It is a domestic animal, my dear, in the same sense that a cockroach is; and it is one that equally well deserves extermination. A snob is a pest to society, and should be regarded as a natural enemy by everybody who has the good of mankind at heart.

This does n't define, I know, and very likely you think it is n't over elegant; but I do hate snobbishness so much that I have to relieve my mind a little before I can begin to speak seriously. Snobbery takes so many forms that to try to express it exactly is like the attempt to define a snake. A little friend of mine described a snake as a "long wriggle that is always horrid;" and when she was further pressed, added that you could "know it by it's always being snaky." A snob is always detestable; but above all else, a snob is always snobbish.

When no less a man than Thackeray took a whole book to set down the snobs, you will not expect me to get them all into a single letter; but then, before he got through, he had included about all the men that walk the earth. David said in his haste that all men were liars, and Thackeray at his leisure proved that all men are snobs; so that the poor creatures have n't a shred of character left, and I am glad I am not a man! I have some compassion on the poor things, however, and think they might be let off a little more easily. Some of the things Thackeray sets down as snobbish, it seems to me, might be called by a name less harsh.

It may not be manly for a man to be ashamed that his father was a coal-heaver and his mother a washwoman; but I can sympathize with him enough to feel that if he makes no pretenses that are false, and only keeps his own counsel, he is not to be blamed. If he is not kind to them, if he deserts and denies them, there is no possibility of excuse; but while that is selfish and vain, it is not what I call downright snobbery. A man who is unkind to his people I call a cad. He is likely

to be a snob too, but this especial form of meanness is caddishness.

Snobbishness as I understand it, and as I most hate it, is a desire to shine at the expense of somebody else. I can overlook, with a good nature that has, I confess, some contempt in it, the person who is ashamed of the truth about his origin, or anything else not as he would have it, which is yet beyond his control; what I cannot tolerate is the attempt to make others discontented and envious. To parade one's wealth or one's family is vulgar and selfish enough; but it is made really vicious by the desire to humiliate those who are less fortunate. The woman who wears diamonds in the street-car — and there are such in America — is sufficiently vulgar; but she may be simply silly from vanity and ignorance of the fitness of things. She may be entirely free from the idea of making anybody unhappy. To the pleasure of the genuine snob it is essential that somebody be hurt and humiliated. Vanity that makes a ridiculous exhibition of itself is simply underbred; but snobbery is necessarily cruel.



A Mr. Tripper instructed you at a dinner, you tell me, that anybody who takes pride in ancestry is a snob. Obviously he is not proud of his, poor man; but he is foolish to show it by railing at those who did have grandfathers. Why is it more snobbish to be pleased that I came of decent and refined people than it is to rejoice that my grandfather's father knew enough at the time of the French Revolution to take advantage of the breaking up of galleries, and to buy good pictures? I am grateful that I inherit the pictures, and equally I am glad that I inherit good traditions and an honored name. As I said the other day, pride in family seems to me admirable, as long as it is a private incentive to living up to tradition, though it is bad the moment it is used to make other people uncomfortable.

The pith of the whole business is that unkindness of snobbishness. I think it is not unfair to define a real snob as a person who through vanity tries to humiliate another. Whether this is done through the parading of real or of imaginary claims to consideration does n't seem to me to make much difference.

The degrees are infinite, and perhaps Thackeray was right in assuming that most of us have some inclination in this direction. The degree of individual blame is not for me to settle.

Self-assertion is often spoken of as if it were necessarily snobbish; but I have noticed that the self-assertion of persons sufficiently high does not get that name. Nobody thinks of calling it snobbish for a queen to insist that those around her stand while she sits; for a duchess to insist upon the proper precedence at dinner; or for a military officer to demand the formal salutes. These things are all a legitimate part of the system. They must be attended to, or the whole form of royal and military life collapses. I hold that the same is true of social life, and that we all of us have to do our part to keep up form and outward observances. No lady would invite to her house a second time a man who walked through a door ahead of her when he should have let her pass, and in dropping him from her lists she is asserting, and righteously asserting, her prerogatives.

The question how far one is to go in this self-assertion is one of the hardest of all social questions. Mrs. Fifield Amory said to me the other day: "I feel so like a cad! I've been arranging to get Katherine into the right dancing-class, and it was so like pulling wires that it was perfectly detestable!" I told her I knew how uncomfortable that sort of work is, and that I thought things should be so the right girls would go into a class as a matter of course; but that the push of people made this impossible. People who do not belong there are so straining every nerve to get in that those who have the right have at least to assert themselves. "Well," she said, "I'd never do it for myself, but Katherine ought to go with her friends, and with her own cousins. I hope I'm not a snob, but I do feel like one."

She is a perfectly ladylike woman, and not in the least pushing. She naturally wishes her daughter to be with her social equals; and the only reason why she had to do anything is that so many mothers push their daughters for the best classes that the matrons are overwhelmed, and the mother who does n't look

after her own chick finds the girl left out. This does not seem to me to be in the least snobbery. It is one of the unpleasant necessities which result from the fact that we have no recognized grades in society. It certainly is n't snobbish for me to expect my cook to stand while I give her orders. Social distinctions are as absolute and as tangible as the rising of the sun; and to ignore them is about as silly. Sometimes there is more snobbery in ostentatious ignoring of social distinctions than in the most rigid observance of them. When Mrs. Granite, who poses as a reformer and a philanthropist, insists upon introducing guests to her parlor-maid, and tells them to shake hands, she is doing the "holier-than-thou" to perfection; and she certainly succeeds in making both guest and maid sufficiently uncomfortable.

No, my dear child, let Mr. Tripper, whom you say you hope never to see again, hold whatever views he pleases about ancestors, and let anybody you like tell you that it is caddish to insist upon social privileges; but do you continue to regard and respect your

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forbears, keep your place in society, and, when the unpleasant duty comes to you, insist upon your social rights. Do your duty in that station to which it has pleased God to call you. Until the day when you find yourself vaunting your superiority for the sake of triumphing over somebody else, you need not be troubled lest you are becoming snobbish! The moment, however, that you find yourself taking pleasure in the jealousy you awaken in another by parading your advantages; the moment you detect yourself vaunting or flaunting for the sake of making others uncomfortable; the moment you see yourself pressing forward so that others may feel humiliated by being left behind; that moment get to your closet as fast as your legs will carry you: go down hard on your marrowbones, and pray God to be merciful to you — a SNOB!

## XXIV

### THE MISFORTUNE OF FOREIGN MATCHES

So the Earl of Cruffud — did he learn to spell his name in Wales, I wonder? — danced the cotillion with you at the great and glorious Biltastor ball! Can he dance? If so, he is a miracle among Englishmen. I hope at least he knew enough to keep off your feet and your frock. I saw Minnie Clapham, not long ago, with an English partner so completely wound up in her train that I did n't see how the pair were to be separated unless they were cut apart. As to reversing, I was staying at Glamore Castle once when the girls took an hour every morning, while the men were out shooting, and practiced whirling around so as to be able to waltz without getting giddy. The men — or the girls, for that matter — can't reverse, and they had to learn the whirling dervish trick or come to grief.

It is funny foreigners are so little able to take

up a thing like that, a thing that to an American comes as easy as breathing. In Paris I went to a ball once at an exclusive house, where the entrance was supposed to be in itself a sort of a patent to nobility, and there I was told that the dancing was to be *à l'Américaine*. That meant that they reversed. The way the men snapped one about was something awful! First you were for three steps jerked to the right, and then for three steps you were jerked to the left; but as for reversing, that was a thing beyond their wildest imagining! If you carry out your threat, and marry a foreigner, you will give up dancing. That I am sure of. You will find, moreover, that the parties are dull beyond words. At the French ball, all the supper we had was trays of glasses full of colored things to drink. I have no idea what they were; some sort of fruit syrups, I suppose, but all utterly detestable.

You want to know how the idea of your marrying a title strikes me, do you? I should say it would be more agreeable to marry a man; but every one to her taste. You say Lord Colcester is so delightful, but I happen

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to know that you know he is engaged to his cousin. As to the Earl of Bareboard, you cannot frighten me with him; you have n't money enough to buy that specimen of the British aristocracy. All means of catering to the vices come high, and foreign titles that are worth anything are among the most expensive of vicious luxuries. The Earl of Bareboard will sell his name and title to the daughter of some pork-packer or patent-medicine vender, on whom the diamonds are as thick as the drops of sweat on the face of her father. She is welcome to him, and he to her. America has lost a few charming women to foreign noblemen, but on the whole, we have reason to be thankful to the nobility for taking away the women they have selected. In general terms, any country is better off without a girl who will sell herself for rank, and if we are to preserve any decent remnants of democracy, this is especially true of us. I have known at least half the American girls who in the last twenty years have made grand marriages abroad, and I certainly feel that society here is well able to bear the loss of most of them.



As for Waldron Leigh, that is another matter, and puts foreign marriage on a different basis. He came over to marry money, and he might take you, if he could not find a real heiress. He would suppose you were going to inherit a great deal more money than you will ever see, and he knows he cannot get an heiress in England. He is the seventeenth son or so of a family that is respectable enough; the sort of people that in America you might have a bowing acquaintance with, and perhaps leave cards on once a year. He is handsome in that way which is two thirds brute force, and that appeals to a woman simply as a matter of animal strength; he is convinced that he is irresistible, and that always has an effect with us women; and I dare say you might marry him, if you really try. I did n't mean to say anything against him, for I don't wish to spur you up to take his part; but I am confident, from the tone of voice in which he mentioned you when he was on here, that he is convinced he can have you if he condescends to say the word. Oh, my dear, just to please me, lead him on to propose, and then

give him the snubbing of his life! You've been told a hundred times that no nice girl lets a man propose unless she means to accept him; but in the first place that is nonsense, and in the second, if it were true, it does n't apply to a colossally conceited Englishman!

I went in to dinner with Waldron Leigh at Nahant last summer, and he was so sure he had made a conquest of me that I could have killed him on the spot! I had to snub him, but I am very much afraid he did n't know it. He thinks he is Adonis and Apollo rolled into one; and he is duller than death!

Seriously, to come to the question in the abstract, you know that I am firm set against foreign marriages. They may be, and they have been, successful. I have seen those that were said to be satisfactory, although I confess I have seldom been able to see that they were much to boast of. I had the audacity to say to Mrs. Frennle, when she was boasting of the happiness of Kate's married life, — Kate married a Thurnwell of somewhere down in Devonshire; the family goes back to the Flood, or the Garden of Eden, or something, as

Mrs. Frennle is continually telling her friends, — I said what was the truth, that the things she dwelt on as evidences of the success of the match were matters that would have been taken for granted in an American marriage. I told her she would have been anything but satisfied if anybody had congratulated her on Lucy's match — Lucy married in Philadelphia — on the ground that her husband had so many horses, did n't drink, and was fairly good-tempered.

International marriages, however, may turn out well, just as any other unlikely thing may happen in this surprising world. They generally succeed best when the girl is content to be a mere zero. Foreign women are bred up to be thoroughly subordinate to their husbands, and they accept it much as they do the fact that they will starve if they do not eat. It is different with us. We are willing — if we are old-fashioned enough to be in love with our husbands — to give up to the wishes and to the will of the man we marry, but he must accept it as a gift, and not as a right. The foreign husband seldom has any conception of a wife,

— of any wife, — except as an inferior and silent partner in the matrimonial firm; and as a rule she is frankly, and indeed unconsciously, treated as such. Plenty of American husbands perhaps hold much the same view as far as the main idea is concerned; but they do not, as the Englishman does, expect the wife to share it. The prejudices of American society force any man who is not an out-and-out black-guard to conceal any feeling that his wife is a mere chattel.

If worst does come to worst here, the wife has at least the support of knowing that she has the sympathy of her social world against a man who has assumed to own her as he does a horse or a dog. It may be a poor and intangible comfort; but I am convinced that many a miserable woman, who would die in slow tortures rather than appeal to the pity of her acquaintances, has yet been sustained by the consciousness that she has it.

The difference is really great abroad. An American tied to an autocratic husband there finds herself in an atmosphere frightfully cold and uncongenial. I had a dreadful half hour

in Florence once, when a New York girl who had married an Englishman broke down one night in the parlor of the hotel, and forced her confidence on me, though I was almost a stranger. She did know my people, and I suppose the poor thing was worn out. She said her husband meant to be kind; that he was kind in his way; that her English friends thought him a model; but she wailingly said she felt as if she did n't exist; she was n't allowed to have any personality. Her husband wanted to do things to please her, but his only idea was to do things he thought she ought to like, never things that she did care for. "He can't understand," she summed up; "and nothing could make him understand. I suppose you'd have to begin a dozen generations back to get it into his head that I'm a human being with tastes and feelings of my own." Of course she was a bit hysterical, and as she avoided me afterward, I suppose she was ashamed of her confidence; but she had really told me the secret of her married life. She had endured it unspoken as long as it was possible, and she had to pour it out.

You know, don't you, who Kenyon Murray is? He has lived in this country about as much as he has in England, and he has an American wife. He did not come to America, however, until after he left Oxford, and all his people are in England. He certainly knows both sides of the question as well as any Englishman ever could know it. He said to me once that not one Englishman in a thousand is ever able to take the woman's point of view; and that of those who could, not one in a hundred ever tried to take it. Now that is literally the opinion of an educated Englishman, and one, too, who is very proud of being English. I said frankly that that seemed to me a sufficient reason for opposing international marriages. He looked at his wife, of whom he is tremendously fond, and with whom he lives most happily, and laughed. "You are entirely right," he said, "in every case except my own."

Whenever one generalizes, exceptions have to be made, and the Kenyon Murrays are certainly an exception; but I insist that my general proposition is right. The whole attitude

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of the foreign man, the attitude which is sanctioned by tradition and ingrained by environment in foreigners, is one which makes the possible happiness of an American girl who marries him so doubtful that international marriage always makes me afraid. If you are content to live on gratified vanity instead of affection, by all means buy a duke, if you have money enough. If you expect to find happiness in sympathetic married love, marry an American. The chances of disappointment are large enough and serious enough in any marriage, and no girl can afford to increase them tenfold by going outside of her own country.

I could dwell on this with a great many more excellent reasons, but, thank Heaven, you are not rich enough to tempt the fortune-hunting titled paupers, and you have, after all, a good deal of common sense.

Besides, there is the man who was at the hunt-breakfast.

P. S. Oh, do get Waldron Leigh to propose, and then SNUB him!

## XXV

### THE EFFECT OF EXPLANATIONS

YOU are deliciously young, my dear! You ask me how you had better explain to a man that you really don't care for him! Now if that means that you actually do care, why, have all the explanations you please, and what kind they are can't make much difference. If you have a secret weakness for the fellow, by all means explain and re-explain that you are utterly and entirely indifferent to him. I fancy that is the truth of the matter, and that you are only trying to make my advice an excuse by which you can cheat yourself into thinking your wishes have nothing to do with the matter. I've done things of that sort myself, and I sympathize with your desire, but I won't be a cat's-paw, if I am a godmother.

If, on the other hand, — as is remotely possible, — you are in earnest and do not care for him, in the name of Heaven don't muddle



things up with explanations. Emotional explanations between a man and a woman never cleared anything up yet, except to make evident affection that had been hidden. Beyond that they only make complications.

Just turn the cold light of common sense on the question for a little, my dear; bring it out of the dusky corners of a sentimental girlish twilight into the day. You must see that you can't have personal discussions with a man about love — especially with a man who is, or thinks he is, in love with you — without making things worse. It is like stirring a fire to put it out. If he really cares for you, he will only care for you more if you tell him you are so sorry for him, that you never meant anything, that you shall never forgive yourself if he is unhappy, that you hope to be his friend, and all that sort of rubbish. You know yourself how you'd cast down your eyes, and how becoming that would be; how you'd put on a soft tone, and be so sweet, and dear, and sympathetic!

Out upon you! I believe you know perfectly well that the effect of talking and "explain-

ing" — Heaven save the mark! — would' be to make your lover more in earnest. You'd be salving your conscience, I dare say, by pretending to yourself you were trying to warn him and to save him pain, and all the rest of that moral twaddle; when the sneaking truth is that you'd be just feeding your own vanity by seeing how much he dotes on you. Any girl, or at least almost any girl, when it comes to her admirers, enjoys teasing the victim on the hook, just for the fun of seeing how he wriggles and squirms. You know you like the luxury of pitying any poor wretch that's miserable because he can't have you! You are my goddaughter; but even that has n't made an angel of you. You are a woman still.

I'm a worldly old thing, I dare say, and may not be able to judge fairly; but I doubt if any woman ever lived that really wanted a man to stop loving her. If a wretch bothers too much, a girl may suppose she wishes him to get over his fondness; but what she really would like would be for him to stop bothering and go on loving. A lot of women have too much pride to show that they care, and some

too much to own to themselves that they care, — which is not at all the same thing! — for the admiration of men greatly below them. I have my doubts about this; and I remember the Frenchwoman, — Madame Récamier, was it? You are only just out of school, and ought to remember, — who set such store by the fact that the common passers on the street turned to look at her. At any rate, given a man about whom a woman might possibly care at all, and she never willingly gives up his devotion. She may be really sorry that he should suffer from hopeless affection, but this only gives a sort of delicious, faintly sub-acid flavor to her pleasure. Her inmost conviction of course is that his passion is the most natural thing in the world, and quite inevitable. A great many women are modest enough not to think *a priori* — that in your language, my dear, means off their own bat — that they are irresistible; but when it comes to the testimony of the faithful attachment of a man, no she-creature ever created could fail to believe such proof of her fascinations. Every one of us knows when a man is making a fool of himself

by falling in love with somebody else; but nothing in the universe can convince a woman in her heart of hearts that a man is n't justified for being in love with her. That is one reason why it is so hard for us to discourage any man who's in love with us. We feel so deeply the justice of his devotion that it almost seems morally wrong to try to end it.

Of course the exception is when a woman is herself genuinely in love with the man. Then she is apt to have so exalted an idea of his merits as to be overwhelmed at his condescension in thinking of her for a moment; and even if he is unworthy of her, she will idealize him into a creature to provoke the highest admiration. I smile at myself, my dear, when I think of my own husband. Fortunately he is a trump, but if he were n't, I know I should contrive to imagine he was something extraordinary, — if I did n't stop being fond of him. That's too deep water for me to swim in, however; and besides, it's too personal to be discussed.

I have often thought of the matter in general terms. The way in which good women,

fine women, will keep in their minds an image of their husbands which is fantastically and pitifully unreal is one of the wonders of life. There is Mrs. —, never mind who. She is one of the most straightforward of human beings; and her husband has n't an honest fibre in him anywhere. The Day of Judgment will not make him see the truth, for he's morally color-blind, and he'd have to be so changed to be able to look at a fact squarely that he'd lose his identity and be somebody else. Yet all the same she adores him. She who's truthfulness itself in every other earthly way, who has n't a thought that is n't like white light from heaven, has set up for herself a stupendous lie in the shape of a glorified image of her husband, and adores this false god as the visible emblem of all truth. It is sublime! Only somehow I always feel like crying when I think of it.

It is all very well to laugh at the White Queen in "Alice," who believed I don't remember how many impossible things every day before breakfast, but anybody who is unable to believe impossible things is not a woman.

I have almost forgotten where I started, and

what I am writing about, and I cannot read over half a dozen pages of crooked scrawls to find out. I always did hate my own handwriting, and I have been ready to murder Sherman because he insists that it's characteristic. I am glad you write a better hand. Be careful always to have your notes look well, especially to the men. Letters are not so important, for they are generally sent to somebody who is not likely to be so particular. — I have a dim notion that I started to scout your absurd notion that you'd better explain to some man that you never could, etc., etc. I hope I've convinced you that whatever else you actually mean and think in the matter, it is not in the least likely to be what you think you think, or what you suppose you mean; and that it is absolute nonsense to explain, unless there is no need of an explanation.

As that is really the whole matter, I think it best to stop before I get involved in another snarl of digressions.

P. S. I wonder if the hunt-breakfast man would show up well in an explanation?

## XXVI

### THE OBJECT OF LIFE

MY dear, what has HE done — whichever he it is — that you ask so pathetically what is the object of life! As your godmother, I can only refer you to the prayer-book or the catechism, and I am sorry to say that, without looking it up, I am a little uncertain just what answer you will find in either. Of course I might reply in phrases carelessly or conventionally repeated from the Bible; but I am old-fashioned, and have nerves over the modern habit of quoting from the Bible in an irreverently casual way. If, instead of answering as a godmother, I write as an ordinary mortal, a worldly old woman such as I am, I should say that the object of life is to love my husband, to preserve my figure, and to enjoy life as well as I may.

The trouble is that this will not appeal to you in the least, and that it really only puts

things in a different way without solving the question. You generally do have a good time, as far as I can make out; you are too young to have to consider your figure; and you have n't any husband. You either have not found your ideal man, or something is wrong in regard to him, so that you are in no mood to be told that it is the chief of your duties to love him, or to believe that thereon hang all the law and the prophets. — See! Here am I quoting Scripture in the way I object to! — Still, your case is not unlike some that have come under my observation; and probably the most satisfactory, because the most truthful, thing I can answer to your doleful query is that the object of your life just now is and should be to be sure you have found your Darby, and that you are his Joan.

When I was a girl, it seemed to me the very most unjust thing in the whole management of the world that a man can go about looking for a mate, while a woman has to wait for one to find her. I have learned by the teaching of innumerable years that this is the greatest blessing Providence has bestowed upon us.



The unfortunate men exhaust all their perceptions hunting, hunting, hunting; and they are completely blinded by the theory that they do the choosing. They are so sure of this as to be in constant danger of being captured without the slightest idea what is happening to them. We have only to sit quiet, — to lie low like Brer Fox, — observe them as they parade before us, and when we wish, take the man that pleases us. At least, that is what I did. I do have a faint remembrance that some other girls wanted the same man, and did n't get him; but of course they don't count. The men are really all the time on trial before us women, and we have the actual decision.

There are complications when two girls fix on the same man. Any woman might have any man in the world, if other women did n't interfere. No man ever lived that could defend himself from matrimony if women really wanted him. If he could, he was a monster! When women get to scrambling over a man, — which is a contemptible thing, for they know he fairly belongs to the one that discovered him, — accident and circumstances have

a good deal to do with the result; but I hope I know you well enough to be sure you are not unhappy from any complication of that sort. If you wished for a particular man, I should be confident you could get him.

I've always been sorry for the girls that are so foolish or so unfortunate as to want a man that belongs to somebody else; and, for that matter, I pity those who do not know how to secure the right one. Not to get switched off into that, however, I want to stick to my text, and insist that just now the object of life with you should be to select and secure the proper husband.

I can see you shy at that word "secure," and swell out your nostril, as if I had proposed something unmaidenly or beneath your dignity. My dear, I utterly disclaim any ill-bred or vulgar meaning. I only wish to say frankly that at your age the question of being properly married is of an importance paramount to anything else. You know this, and if you pretend to think otherwise, it is either idiocy or affectation. Unhappily there are foolish girls to-day who have had their heads turned by

the pestiferous babble of that most monstrous of unsexed hybrids, the so-called "modern woman," and who regard themselves as very clever when they talk or think about a "higher destiny than mere domestic servitude," as one of them said in my hearing not long ago. Heaven forbid that you should be such a fool! Any normal, wholesome life is some sort of a servitude, and domestic servitude, if by that one means being a good wife and mother, an inspiration to husband and children, a maker of that most rare and most beautiful of earthly inventions, a home, seems to me preferable to servitude to some silly fad, some barren, illogical theory, or, worse yet, to mere notoriety!

I think that a very pretty paragraph, my dear! But I did n't write it just for the sound. I mean every word of it. I accept the statement of the Bible, "male and female created he them," and as I do not think it probable that all the protests "advanced women" may or can make are likely to persuade Providence that the provisions of creation were a mistake, it seems to me better to accept things as they are, and to shape life accordingly.

I remember that once in my girlhood I got into a petty fit over my limitations, and told my father it seemed to me very unjust that women should be made with so much less chance in life than men. "Have you ever been a man, my child?" he said. "If you have, you know the limitations of our sex, and of course can judge." I confess that I was not wholly convinced, but I did get it into my head that there were at least two sides to that question. At any rate, I had the sense in the long run to see that if I had been born to a circumscribed lot, I should be a fool to spend my strength fretting about it.

I am getting dreadfully far away from the "object of life" question, I dare say you think; but really I am talking about that and nothing else. We are women, my dear child, and it is the lot of women to be wives and mothers. Many women are happy and useful who are neither; but they are in a way abnormal. It is the object of your life to be properly and happily mated with a noble man. Every woman knows that marriage is the normal and legitimate condition to which she should

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aspire; and when you come across one of the females to-day, rather numerous, who deny this, you may be sure that personal bitterness, personal vanity, or sheer silliness inspires her. She has been warped by some painful experience, she is desirous of posing as the champion of her sex, or she has not the power of judging life broadly and logically.

This very likely seems to you harsh; but go over the champions of celibacy, the women who directly and indirectly advocate a life that is founded on the idea that our sex is to be independent of the other, and you will find that I am not wrong. Truth is apt to be harsh; and the truth that we cannot get on without husbands is almost as great as the fact that men without wives would be the most helpless, hopeless, unfulfilled creatures imaginable.

And the truth of this has been hidden in the innermost corner of the mind of every sane woman since there began to be sane women on this little round globe!

## XXVII

### THE TOUCHSTONE OF TRUTH

I HAD to stop yesterday without saying anything I started to say. I knew that when you asked me what is the object of life, you only wanted sympathy. Of course I have n't any idea what the trouble is, and the very fact that you asked the question showed well enough that in trying to do your duty and get happily married, you had found something that went wrong and hurt. I am sorry. I can only say in general terms that I know how horrid it is when HE does n't understand, or seems to have fallen into the clutches of some other girl, or has been unresponsive, or any one of the innumerable things that may happen.

I am obliged to guess a good deal about you, and to judge of your affairs on general principles, for you write chiefly in parables and conundrums; girls are rather apt to do that when they are in earnest. I can only treat you as if

you were a sort of algebraic symbol of the sex; and the process is as trying to me as it is likely to be unsatisfactory to you. If you would only tell me, — but if you could, you would n't be you; so there is the end of that.

In the way of advice I have only two things to say. One is to be as hopeful and as patient as you can; and the other is never to let any false pride or any want of frankness stand between you and a man you care for. The first does n't need any dwelling on; although I might say a good deal about how completely the world may seem to have gone all wrong one minute, only to appear brighter the next from the very contrast. Things are seldom as bad as they look, — although when they are, Heaven help us, for then they are apt to be a great deal worse than they look! In general terms, however, it is always well to regard troubles and bothers as pin-pricks, of which the smart will be over directly. This is so obviously true that it probably sounds to you untrue; and in any case, there is no use in my dwelling on it.

The other point, however, needs to be in-

sisted on, and said over again and again, until a girl can get the idea transformed into a principle. We all begin by feeling that if a man really cares for us, he will understand how we regard him, how we think, and all the little shades of sentiment that no human being ever did or ever can understand in another. "He should have known how I felt" has been the epitaph of many a girl's happiness, and of the happiness of many a man, too, I suppose; although men get over such a hurt more quickly. If a man evidently or apparently has not understood, don't fall into this error of assuming that he is supernaturally gifted with the power to read your thoughts, or the more stupid error of regarding his power of perception as an index of his affection. If the matter is trivial, forget it; if it is important, be perfectly frank, and speak to him.

I am not sufficiently clever as an analyzer of human motives to be able to say what feminine qualities make it so hard for us to be frank with a man when we care for him. I should need to be Henry James, and Henry James with double his usual number of parentheses,



so that no human being could even guess at my meaning when I had got it into words. I do know that we take refuge in all sorts of excuses to avoid saying honestly that we have been misunderstood. We begin by telling ourselves that as the obtuseness of the man is proof positive that he does n't care for us, it is of course of no use to explain anything. We go on with the assumption that if we speak he will think us unmaidenly, and we are apt to dwell on that idea until rational speech becomes impossible.

To set little misunderstandings right frankly and clearly, without an air that gives the matter an undue importance, is the secret of preserving friendship, and it is the secret no less of preserving love. Beware of treating small matters as if they were great ones, and you will then be able to handle anything you wish to explain with a light touch which will make it easy for you to say and for him to receive.

If it comes to a misunderstanding really important, however, ask yourself whether the man is so little to you that you are ready to let him go out of your life rather than to make

the sacrifice of speaking fully. I am not counseling you to be undignified, unmaidenly, unwomanly; I am only saying that it is better to be honest at a hard moment than to regret it through life.

I write in what may seem cold generalities; but I can do no better, since I know nothing of the circumstances. Very likely by this time the whole trouble has been set right, and has been forgotten. In that case, treat this letter as an old woman I knew in the country treated her medicine. Some prescription for the toothache was late in reaching her, so that the tooth had been taken out before the medicine arrived. She remarked that it was just as well, for now she would have a remedy in the house to take in case she had one of her frequent attacks of rheumatism. You may not need my advice by the time it gets to you, and I hope you won't; but it is of universal application, and you may keep it on hand to apply when some other trouble arises. The advice will still be good, even if the difficulty is entirely different.

## XXVIII

### THE SLIME OF THE DIVORCE-COURT

YOUR protest that my view of marriage is antiquated and outgrown does not, it seems to me, ring entirely true. At any rate, I stand by my guns, and insist that marriage is the normal aim of any sane young woman. I know all the modern talk, and am fully aware how many latch-key girls are persuading themselves to the contrary; but this does not move me in the least. I have heard all the babble about the slavery of marriage, — which is too often true, Heaven knows! — I have heard philanthropists declaim, and unlovely women gabble; I have even read Ibsen: — I am willing, too, to acknowledge that the half has not been told; for I have looked into some women's lives, and I know that nobody has yet succeeded in expressing what a hell marriage may be. All that I cannot help; and neither can I help knowing that it is often as bad for

men as for women. It is bad enough for any woman to live with some men, but God help any man that has to live with some women!

Fire will burn, and water will drown; but I do not on that account recommend that you try to live without either. No more do I hold that a woman should avoid marriage because marriage may make her miserable. In nine cases out of ten, when marriage is a failure, I think the fault is with the woman; or, to speak more exactly, I believe the wife has more power to prevent disaster than the husband, and more often fails to do so. But good or bad, with the fault on either side or on both sides, marriage is what we were made for.

To you as woman to woman I may say frankly what, as a matter of principle and of loyalty to my sex, I would never confess to a man, that marriage must be pretty bad or old-maidhood is a great deal worse. We are made so, my dear. Male and female created, as I quoted from the Bible the other day, and paired off to the end of time. Men get on somehow without wives, and I know, as I have said over and over, some delightful old maids,

— women to love and respect ; but no man lives single without becoming narrow and in most cases selfish, and no woman reaches her best if she lives a single life. What wives and mothers those delightful old maids would have made! No mortal woman can help becoming narrow if she remain unmarried. A fine temperament and a sense of humor may help her, and her surroundings may develop her; but in any case she has missed the best of life. Not to have known what it is to be a wife and a mother, not to have had the pain of it even, — I am a worldly old thing, my dear, but the bare idea of not having been Sherman's mate and the mother of his son brings tears into my wicked old eyes! I have had my share of hard times, and marriage may mean a good deal of suffering in one way and another, — but not to have had it! That is too dreadful to think of. Never mind who tells you to the contrary, and never mind what it costs, if you can be the loved and respected wife of a man who fills your heart. That pays for everything.

I did n't mean to write in this impassioned

style; and I take breath to remember that the difficulty is, that you may fear being a wife not loved and respected. Any wife may be respected if she chooses to be, so I do not propose to go into that. For the love; — well, my child, it is a hard saying for a girl to accept, but to have loved — simply to have loved really and truly — seems to me to be worth anything it can cost. Unless a girl marries a monster, moreover, she may almost always be loved, provided she start out in marriage with a man she cares for and whom she can respect. If he finds her worthy, love is almost sure to come. There are men who are brutes, and brutes they would remain if they married the best women in the world; but they are luckily rare, and a girl may generally recognize them before marriage. Girls are so made that they are pathetically exposed to the danger of persuading themselves that they can reform men, and remake men, and all the rest of it. I can only pity them; and I am sure you are not likely to fall into that appalling error.

The arguments for and against marriage I spare you farther. They are generally

unpleasant. It is such a pity to rob the whole relation of its romance, as the generality of modern writers insist upon doing. I am willing to acknowledge the wisdom, or indeed the necessity, of matrimony, and beyond that I should like to be spared as far as possible from the reasons physiological, psychological, political, and ethical. So much of life is unavoidably hard and dry matter of fact that I insist upon preserving about love and marriage all the illusions possible. Since the central fact is capable of standing the test of all sorts of logical, statistical, philosophical, and all the rest of it reasons, why may we women not wrap it about with rosy veils and charming delusions? That is what I say to the men; to you, my dear, since you are a woman and can understand, I may whisper that our illusions are in reality the highest truth. Science argues the whole thing out as one might weigh a flower. Is the perfume of a blossom any less true or less real than the tangible petals because it is not to be gauged by the swaying of the scales?

What I mean to say in this letter, however,

has to do with the darker side of married life. I am like one of the old prophets, who were extremely uncomfortable themselves under the burden of a message until they had made everybody else uncomfortable by delivering it, when it is to be hoped that they felt better. I must say something of divorce, for you cannot live a day without hearing it talked about, and you should have some sort of definite and rational opinions about it.

The modern way of looking at divorce is the natural and inevitable result of the attitude of the present generation toward marriage. I am obliged to confess, moreover, that this is more largely the result of the changed sentiment of women than that of men. Men, from pure selfishness if from nothing else, have recognized that society, in all its phases, is for amusement in a secondary sense only, and that primarily it is for the arrangement of matrimony. A certain type of modern woman has revolted, naturally enough, from the selfishness and the cruelty of which man at his worst is capable; and they have not been wise enough to see that not on that account can the



laws of nature or of society be altered. They have clamored — oh, how I do hate the clamoring of a public woman! — to have human life and social conditions rearranged according to their ideas. They have effected — the crowding of the divorce-courts.

I was at a luncheon in New York not long ago when it seemed to me that the entire conversation turned on the question whether this woman would get a divorce so as to marry a specified man, whether now that another man had got his divorce he would marry a specified woman, and so on. I felt, when I came away, that if there were anything in the nature of a moral Russian bath in New York, I would go and try to get rid of a sensation of moral uncleanness. It made me feel that American society has come to be horribly plebeian. This is largely, of course, because the vulgar New York plutocracy is so much in evidence. An aristocracy of money must always be common and unclean; and the New York "smart set" is, I suppose, the most horribly vulgar social phenomenon the world ever produced. At least, I hope so! Even the pork-nourished

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coteries of the West are refined by contrast. The divorce-court records of New York and Newport — and Boston is rapidly coming on in the scale too — are the most humiliating indictment that could exist on the conditions of social life in this country.

To me it is horrible to see the callousness of the modern “smart” woman on this subject. A year ago a divorce-suit was in progress which involved the besliming of some of the families best known in Boston. Of course the newspapers printed every incriminating letter that was introduced, and the most shocking epistles to and from the woman whose husband was divorcing her were in the hands of anybody who had not self-respect enough to keep from reading them. On one occasion the sister of this woman was at the Sylvan Club with a party of friends, and on the tennis court, amid shrieks of laughter from the company, she read aloud from the morning paper letters which utterly destroyed her sister’s reputation. A charwoman in the slums would have had more refinement! I can understand how these cheap people have no moral feeling;

but I cannot see how they can be willing to display so openly their lack of all taste.

There is only one decent way in which a woman can look at marriage, — and that is as a thing that is final. If it is possible for her to regard the union as stopping short of death, she is considering herself in the light of a possible loose woman! I beg your pardon, but there's no other way of putting it. Of course there are circumstances where a woman has to leave a man, but for her deliberately to look forward to such a possibility before she marries, or when she marries, is to confess to herself that she is willing to be disreputable! Whether she likes it or does not, the fact will remain that she gives herself to a man as a wife or as a mistress, and a wife cannot conceive of any end to union short of death itself.

This sounds extravagant in this day of talk that I call vile and of views which seem to me degrading; but however she protests, every modest woman feels it in her heart to be utterly true. She may sink through selfishness to a lower plane of action, and if she does, she

will generally persuade herself that she is converted to a broader view of life; but even the vilest woman has in her heart somewhere a spot in which lodges, so that it can never be got out, the conviction of the sanctity of marriage, because it is the consecration of soul and body for life and death.

If you think of marriage at all, think of it as final. Regard it as a union which only death will end, whether you like it, or whether you like it not at all. A young woman of excellent family, of unexceptional social position, and personally of a disposition more refined and more serious than that of most of the girls of her age and set, astonished me not long ago by declaring that all her friends who were married had accepted wedlock with a perfect understanding that the divorce-court afforded a way of escape if things became too uncomfortable. I refuse to believe her. I refuse to think that we have fallen so low that among people of cultivation honest love is so much a thing of the past that a girl — a good girl, I mean — can marry a man with such a thought hidden like a reptile in her mind. My answer

to her remark was: "My dear, I did not know you had ever lived in Chicago." She indignantly denied having ever been in Chicago, but she knew that I knew how much of her summers she has of late years spent at Newport. She has never married, however, and can speak only from the outside.

If you decide to have no morals, my dear goddaughter, do cling still to something in the shape of manners. If you have no respect for the sanctity of marriage as it used to be believed in, — and as even a worldly old thing like me may still hold on to it, thanks to having been lucky enough to get a husband a hundred times too good for me, — at least do have some regard for your family, for yourself, and for your children, if you ever have any. A woman who has been through the divorce-court hardly comes out unsmirched even when she is conspicuously blameless, poor thing; and she who has been shown to be in the wrong, who has even owed her divorce to the benefit of a doubt, is in the thought of every living man that hears her name, no matter how pure-minded he may be, a woman who has been

smirched. The divorce-court is the department of society where goods are stamped as damaged.

The modern women who have protested against the tyranny of marriage have first made every discontented wife eager to break her chains. The next step was the inevitable and easy one of looking upon marriage as a state which might be taken on trial, and escaped from if the result was not pleasing. Easy divorce inevitably makes easy marriage; far less care and deliberation are needed in a case where any blunder can be remedied by recourse to law.

Two things, moreover, have greatly helped this modern attitude toward marriage: the growth of religious disbelief and the idea of democracy. The decline of faith in religion, and particularly a decline of faith in the church, naturally leaves room for the growth of a spirit of self-indulgence. People frankly vent their selfishness by indulging the impulses of the moment. They are not restrained by the fear of consequences in another life, and they are prepared to run the risk of any-

thing that may happen in this one. They say boldly that they propose to get all the pleasure out of life they can, and they utterly refuse to be hampered by any sense of responsibility. Society, family, even children, are ignored, as far as recognition goes of any claim that calls for self-sacrifice. These people live in openly selfish disregard of anything but impulse. To my thinking, they prove how impossible it is to have a society without religion; and at any rate, they show what we come to if we give up the idea of responsibility to others.

Then democracy, with its nonsense about equality, comes in to break down all responsibility to one's position. The rising generation are always ready enough to take advantage of the standing that has been won for their family by ancestors who made sacrifices to duty, who put their pleasure second to the claims of society and of the family; but they decline to do anything to keep up the standard. They would hate their ancestors for having disgraced the name, but they do not trouble to consider the welfare of their descendants as being any reason why they should not put into

the family history a page smutted by the record of a divorce-scandal.

In cases in which women and men must be divorced, the only thing to be said is that this is a fearful misfortune, and that the sufferer is to be pitied. When divorce is the fault of a man or of a woman, when it is a means of self-indulgence, I claim that no decent woman ought to recognize the divorced person as even tolerable in self-respecting society. I have never broken this rule myself, and I am happy to say that no woman who has been connected with a divorce-case, in any way but as a misfortune for which she was not responsible, has ever been invited into my house.

It all makes me very sad, dear girlie. There is very little good in writing about it, I suppose. I am not sure where the remedy lies; but I do pray Heaven — and that with the whole strength there is in me — that I may never live to see the name of anybody I care for dragged through the slime of the divorce-court!



## XXIX

### “WHEN LOVE SHOOK HANDS WITH POVERTY”

HAD you better marry a poor man? By all means! Your whole training, your entire life, have bred you for just that thing. You have had everything that money could buy, and so you are naturally fitted to go without. You must have proved the worthlessness of riches, and you are admirably fitted now — picked out, predestined, as it were — to be the wife of the poorest man you can find.

It may be a little hard on the poor man. If he is so unlucky as to care for you, he will very likely be unhappy to see you go without things; and he may fret at not being able to give you what you've been accustomed to have. But he will of course be used to being fretted, so that is no matter. I don't know how well you will manage to hide your discomfort; and it is probable he will have a pretty fair idea of how you miss luxury, — an idea more

clear and keen in proportion to his refinement and his unselfishness. I hope he'll be thick-skinned, because that would make it easier for him; but if he is n't, he has nobody to thank but himself. He should have known better than to fall in love with you. His discomfort will be part of the price he will pay for the happiness of calling you his wife.

It will be an amusing lark for you to keep house in an apartment, — a nice little flat in some cheap hotel. You have a suite of rooms now that is probably larger than the whole domicile in which you, and your husband, and your one servant will be stowed. It will be great fun; quite like playing doll's housekeeping. When guests arrive and the tea-tray is under the sofa in the drawing-room, — I hope you have read "Cranford" and remember Mrs. Forrester, — it will seem to you most amusing to have the maid come in and fish it out. When you are half dead for want of sleep and your cook-parlor-maid-second-girl has a cough on the other side of a partition as thin as gauze, when you wish to dress in a hurry for a dinner and dear Harry has to be shaving

at the one glass at the same time — No; I will not go into details so minute and intimate. I will content myself with saying that each day will bring its own new and exquisite amusement. It will be tremendous fun — for a while.

I am not sure how long it will be great fun. You see I have not the happiness of knowing Harry or Tom or Dick, or whatever his infamously charming and dear name is. I am ignorant, too, how fond you are of him. I cannot tell how he is suited to fit into the doll's house. The humor of the situation will depend so much upon what he is like and how well you suit each other, that I shall have to be sure dear Reginald or Algernon or Christopher will bear his part of the game with a tolerable grace, and with considerable persistence, to be convinced that the second month will be as droll as the first, and the third as attractive as either.

My dear child, you have some sense of humor, and your father's set of the poems of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, if my memory is not at fault, is very splendidly bound in crim-

son morocco. Some rainy day when your frock is so becoming as to have put you in a pleasant frame of mind, when your digestion is in order, and the frock aforesaid is of a color to harmonize with the crimson binding, get out the book and sit down with it before the library fire, — I should say on the side where the light is best on the Diaz over the mantel. When a picture has cost \$12,000, it is only showing it proper respect to look at it from a favorable point; and if you are to marry a poor man, you will have fewer opportunities for this sort of thing than you have had. Then open the volume and find a poem called "Contentment."

It begins: —

Little I ask; my wants are few;  
 I only wish a hut of stone,  
 (A *very plain* brown stone will do,) —  
 That I may call my own; —  
 And close at hand is such a one,  
 In yonder street that fronts the sun.

The doctor lived in Beacon Street, you remember, and knew the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue well.

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Read the whole, my dearest goddaughter.

I always thought cold victual nice; —  
My *choice* would be vanilla-ice.

I own perhaps I *might* desire  
Some shawls of true Cashmere, —  
Some marrowy crapes of China silk,  
Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.

The poem represents, I fancy, a good deal more truly than you realize, the genuine attitude of your mind toward poverty.

Marry your poor man, marry him, by all means. I will send you a refrigerator as a wedding gift. You can let me know about the size when the flat is selected.

P. S. If you had told me who he is, I might have been more explicit.

I suppose the men at the hunt-breakfast were all rich, — or did I hear that some were there who don't keep horses or hunt at all? It is n't of any consequence. Don't bother to answer, or I shall think you regard me as a regular gossip.

## XXX

### A PERSONAL DISCLAIMER

WHY, of course I understand that you had n't any particular man in mind. You need n't have taken a special-delivery stamp to tell me that. Certainly you had not; by no means; never in the world; *jamaïs, jamaïs, jamaïs !* I only meant that if you had had, and that if you had then chosen to mention his name, or if you had taken some man you know but do not in the least care for, — not the very least, I mean; never could care for, or would care for, you know; — taken him just as a sort of hypothesis, an example, as it were, it would have been easier for me to give an exact opinion. Now I apologize. I hope that is sufficient. If it is n't, you may imagine me on my old marrow-bones, with outstretched hands and streaming eyes. I trust this will soothe you, although you do seem to feel rather strongly about the matter. Of course I never made a stupider

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blunder than when I hinted that there might be a particular man within a thousand miles of your thought. Of course you could n't have had an actual man in mind! Oh, surely not, by all the gods!

P. S. Who is he?

## XXXI

### “WHEN POVERTY HAS KISSED WITH LOVE”

MY dear child, I would n't have hurt you for the world. I am sorry that you could n't take in jest what I meant so. I am afraid the situation is more serious than I thought. At any rate, I will be serious with the solemnity of a whole row of sphinxes now. I was in earnest under my quizzing before, for I wanted to let you have a glimpse of the grave side of the question; but now, without any joking, you shall hear just what I think about your marrying a poor man.

We will assume that the poor man is well-educated, well-bred, straightforward, and has a salary of \$1800 a year. — If I am to be serious, I may as well say that I know all about Harry Ashmore, my dear, but you will please observe that I pretend I don't, and that I carefully write of an entirely hypothetical person! — We will assume that this imaginary poor



man has refined tastes, no little cleverness, and that it is believed by his friends that he will rise; but at twenty-eight he has advanced only to the moderate salary named. This certainly may mean that he is never likely to become a millionaire, — and indeed it means that you will do wisely to contemplate the possibility that he may remain a poor man all his days.

Very well, my dear, let us consider.

You have had very little to do with expenses of any sort, except in the matter of dress, because everything else has been provided for you. With an economy on which you pride yourself, and with the aid of numerous gifts of gowns and gems, — please notice the alliteration: I don't do that often! — you have managed to dress on \$2000 a year. A very little mental arithmetic will show you that when out of \$1800 has come house-rent, wages of servants, traveling expenses, living expenses, and the price of at least clothing enough to allow your husband to appear among his fellow men, there will not be \$2000 left for your raiment, or, indeed, any very large fragment of

that sum. You may take this as typical of the whole problem. The question in plain English is, do you care enough for this imaginary poor man to remodel your whole manner of living, to give up the luxuries which have been the ordinary commonplaces of every-day life, —to do all this, and to like it. The question is whether you can think the love and companionship of the poor man a sufficient recompense for all you must forego; — a recompense, too, that will be permanently satisfactory. You have to consider, not whether poverty would be a lark for a week or a year, but whether you are willing deliberately to take it up for the rest of your mortal life. If you cannot find it in your power to do this gladly, if you cannot at the bottom of your heart feel that for the sake of being the wife of this poor man you are glad to face the necessity of being as impecunious as a church mouse in Lent all your days, then you have no right to think of such a marriage for a single minute.

I can fancy how he, poor fellow, has turned the thing over and over in his mind, very likely through long, sleepless nights, inventing wildly

impossible schemes for making a fortune, reproaching himself for ever having thought of tempting you to give up so much, and endeavoring to make up his mind never to think of you again. A rich girl may give a poor man a great deal of misery without knowing it. If you ever should care for a man without a fortune, my child, part of the price you must pay Fortune for the good she has bestowed upon you must be the sorrow of knowing you pain him every time he thinks of the differences between you in the way of money. If he is a manly fellow, he cannot help reflecting how your life must be altered if you marry him. He cannot help feeling as if he were a selfish brute ever to have thought of the possibility of your loving him and stepping down from your golden elevation. If he is sensitive, he is likely, moreover, to feel the humiliation of not being able to take the man's part of shaping destiny; of not being in a position to bestow rather than to deprive.

If he is worth anything, some such thoughts and feelings will surely be in his mind, and you have no right to be anything less than

utterly honest with him. If you answer his doubts by consenting to marry him, you are doing him one of the bitterest wrongs a woman can do a man if you are not prepared to bear poverty, and to bear it, moreover, with such a gladness of love that he shall never be able in your after life to find regret in your heart for what you have done. No woman, alas, can tell what the future may bring her, and no two human beings can be sure that love does not blind their eyes; but no true woman has a right, or, indeed, has a will, to involve the man she cares for in any evil she can foresee. You are bound to consider this matter as steadily and as cold-bloodedly as you are able, and to look at the future as calmly as you possibly can, with a view of discovering its very darkest possibilities.

In your case, you know that your father would see that you never really suffered; but you know equally well that his fortune has to provide for the rest of a rather large family. You ought to know, too, that the poor man is not of the sort — the imaginary poor man, of course — to wish to be dependent on your

father. You would n't respect him, if he were. Do not, I beg of you, shirk the issue by supposing all sorts of pleasant things that might happen, — legacies from imaginary aunts and impossible uncles, and fortunes that might descend from the clouds. Face the situation squarely. Do you care enough for him to be willing to be poor, really poor, really to go without things you have had as a matter of course all your life, willing to hear your acquaintances talk of the opera and not be able to afford to go, willing to cramp and worry and save, willing to make over old gowns until you hate the sight of them, and after all to be a little out of style, willing to do all these things, and to smile at them, for the sake of doing it for him and with him?

That is the question, my child, and the frankness with which you look at it is the measure of your honesty as a woman. If you are not willing to face it, God protect any good man from ever falling in love with you! It is probably the most momentous question you will be called upon to answer in your entire life. You must give him your whole

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heart, including the cheerful sacrifice of your enjoyment in pleasant, costly things, or you must let him go his way. You may regret losing him, but you are a fool to wreck your life through a want of courage to look at what is plainly in your sight. You had far better than to be half-hearted in this business be like the sensible if cold-hearted damsel in "Mother Goose:" —

The little maid replied,  
(Some say a little sighed):

"But what shall we have for to eat, eat, eat?"

Will the love that you're so rich in  
Make a fire in the kitchen,

Or the little God of Love turn the spit, spit, spit?"

Leave the poor man, and make your heart as cold as a dog's nose, if you cannot take him with a love so absolute that poverty is nothing.

It is no use, my dear. That blotch *is* a silly tear. I tried to carry it off by being funny, but that wrinkled spot spoils everything. The matter is too solemn for me. If you only love him a little and yourself more, at least be kind to him and to yourself by sending him away. It would only bring misery to marry him. You

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would have a more or less delightful honeymoon, and a miserable existence all the rest of your days. You don't marry for the first month, but for all the long years that come after; for the years when you are past your first passion, past the power of finding fun in inconveniences that amuse youthful happiness, but which are gravel in the shoes of age; you marry for the times of sickness and anxiety, the years of the bringing up of children, and you marry for the autumn of life. Think of this, and be honest with yourself. If you have a doubt, tell him to go — for his own sake.

## XXXII

"JOY IS FOR THOSE WHO DARE"

I HAD faith in you! I knew you would! My dear godchild, I wish I could hug you! I am sure you would n't be engaged to him unless you really meant it, and meant it in a way perfectly serious. I am so glad you are capable of loving a man so that you can make sacrifices for his sake.

And I am glad for your own sake. You will find that this is the only thing that really pays. You will get a thousand times more out of married life than is possible where people are swamped in money. You two will plan things together, do things together, go without things together. You cannot help being drawn into a companionship that must be so close as to be one of the most delightful things in the world. It is when husband and wife go separate and independent ways that they tire of each other. The friendliness of contriving together how to



make a narrow income cover wide needs is not only delightful in itself, but it is the most effective preservative of affection that has ever been found. I know there are rich people that love each other devotedly; but I am afraid there are not too many of them, and I am equally sure that even they miss a great deal of pleasure in what I may call the intimacies of poverty.

I can hardly help smiling to find myself writing in this enthusiastic fashion in praise of poverty, for I know how beastly annoying it is. All the earlier years of my married life Sherman and I were poorer than a squirrel in the spring. We had to take every individual penny, and turn it over, and examine it under a microscope, and keep it over night for the support it gave our courage, and then get it changed into mills so we could spend it a little at a time. I literally used to go about with folded paper in my purse when I had shopping to do, so that it would n't look so disgracefully thin! But, my child, the fun we had in those days contriving how to squeeze out money enough to go to the theatre or to have

some innocent little dissipation makes me sigh in envy of the poor! Now, we order the carriage and go to the opera, if we think we shan't be too much bored, and I am sure we both had a hundred and a thousand times more fun when we debated whether we should walk there, and brave all our fashionable friends and rich relatives in the lobby on our way to the second balcony. Charles Lamb has said all this a thousand times better than I can; but oh, my dear, I wish I were young, and married to a poor young man with no especial prospects, that I was over head and ears in love with, and who was named Sherman!

It is time for me to stop writing, for I am merging toward extravagancies, and of course I ought to tell you you made a frightful mistake in not taking that old millionaire with the bad temper who has been at your feet all winter. At least I ought to point out that there were plenty of desirable fellows you might have had who have quantities of money: but somehow I can only be glad you have chosen as you have. I do so dearly hope you will be

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happy, and I believe to the bottom of my heart that you deserve to be.

When I send you that refrigerator for your flat, it will be full of blessings, — and not cold ones, either.

## XXXIII

### A COUNSEL ANENT HUSBANDS

YOU do not ask me how you shall treat your husband after you get him, but I shall feel my duty to be incomplete if I don't offer you some good advice on that subject. I am sure how to treat a husband is far more important than golf or bridge, but not half so much instruction is given on the subject.

The first year of your married life will be a hard one. It would be an impossible one if love did n't come in as a lubricator. That first year has wrecked many a promising marriage that might have gone on smoothly if the first twelve months could have been got over properly. It is the time when you and he are trying to learn how to run in unison. With all the good-will in the world, adjustment is not easy. It will be easier for you than for him in some ways, for in the first place you are nine years younger, and in the second place he is a man.

Always remember that it is more easy for a man to give way in big things than in little ones. He may be argued with about an important decision, and when he is convinced, he is of course — if he is a gentleman — ready to make the sacrifice or the concession. In the little things he would never remember, and even if he would, it is not possible to argue them out. A woman sees the point in trifles; she knows how important they are, and besides, she remembers. She understands, as a man never seems to be able to understand, how like a grain of sand in the bearing of a watch may be some little thing that a man never would feel and never would see. Just make up your mind to ignore his carelessness in little matters, to endure his forgetting, and not to lay it to heart when he does over and over some trifling trick that he has known is not pleasant to you, and that you think he ought to remember. Julia Calumet really wrecked her whole life because her husband would put his cigarette ashes on the rugs. He had always done it, and he could n't in the least see why he should n't. He could n't or

would n't appreciate how it teased her, — she was a creature of habit and nerves anyway, — and she fretted, and fussed, and made herself ill over what was really of no importance. She said that if he cared for her comfort, he would appreciate how she felt about it, — he might have, if he had been a woman. Their whole married life went to pieces because she was a fool about that silly thing. Never be such a dunce as to think that your husband's forgetfulness means that he does n't care for you. He must to the end of his life be simply a man, and he will never be able to comprehend that you mind or why you mind. In nine cases out of ten he will be utterly oblivious that you have ever shown that you cared, — and he will be devoted to you all the time!

In little things men are certainly more selfish than women, or at least they seem so. Perhaps it is that they never are conscious that the comfort of life depends on little things. They are bred to have somebody managing and looking out for their ease in the hundred trifles of domestic life, and very likely the sense of proper perception has through generations

become atrophied and obsolete. Trifles are what chiefly make up the happiness of a woman, and by some inscrutable law of Providence, not one man is born in a thousand that has any perception of such a thing. Your future comfort will depend greatly on your hardening your heart so as not to care, or at least on your refusing ever to see anything in the neglect of your taste in little things except inevitable masculine perversity bestowed on man by Heaven for the discipline of woman. Break your husband of little ways that annoy you, if you can pleasantly and peaceably; but for the love of all that is good, bear no malice if you cannot!

Another thing which is of great importance is that you should keep him up in little courtesies. A man respects a woman who is properly exacting, although he may grumble a little. I tell Sherman that I have too much regard for him ever to allow his wife to be treated with any slighting of courtesy, even by her husband. If you put yourself into the attitude of a slave or an inferior being, there is not a man alive that will not accept it, — or

if there is, I have never seen him. I have encountered some meek men, but never one who would not allow his wife, if she would, to assume the position of a mere cipher to him as the significant figure. Be a little exacting, my dear, even at the cost of a bit of self-sacrifice, for in no other way can you keep the esteem of your husband from insensibly lessening by fine shades and degrees.

I may seem to be writing as if I pretended to be a philosopher, but I am writing what I know. Some men are brutes, and nothing can be done with them anyway; but with a decent fellow, a very pleasant permanent fashion of living may be established simply by keeping quietly before his mind the fact that he has married a woman worthy of consideration. The truth is that we women all have an instinct, or an inherited tendency, or some infernal quality, in virtue of which we have the impulse when once we are married either to rebel entirely from all control, — which naturally is not the case if we love our husbands, — or to become abject slaves. In these enlightened and emancipated days this tendency is greatly



modified, but it does show itself in most marriages by the wife's letting her husband treat her as if she were a mere comrade. If a woman allows her husband to bear himself toward her with a careless indifference to courtesy, he is sure to come to feel toward her a careless indifference of regard. — That is sound wisdom! If you care for your husband, make him treat you with respect, so that he may not come to value less what is or should be his most precious possession, the wife of his bosom.

Perhaps the greatest sacrifice you will be called upon to make to domestic peace will be to forego the pleasure of speaking when events show that your advice, slighted beforehand, was really the wisest of counsel. If you ever find yourself saying triumphantly to your husband, "What did I say? Did n't I tell you so?" go at once and have your tongue amputated! Don't run the risk of being unable to resist the temptation of saying it again; for a repetition of that doom-dealing speech is more than the most ardent masculine affection can survive. If you will only be quiet, the fair-

mindfulness of the man will generally prompt him to say it himself, and then you have all the glory without having robbed him of the sense of magnanimity which makes him able to bear the humiliation of being convicted in error. If he does not speak, you at least have avoided the nothing-less-than-fatal mistake of taunting him with having been wrong in his opinion and having failed to recognize your cleverness.

“I told you so” is absolutely the death-knell of marital happiness!

## XXXIV

### “TO MARRIAGE ALL THE STORIES FLOW”

It is odd how things come to you the moment you are interested in a particular subject. Just after I sent off my last epistle I came on this quotation from Dean Swift: —

“The reason why so many marriages are unhappy is because young ladies spend their time in making nets, not in making cages.”

The whole philosophy of marriage is here in a nutshell, and you will do well to get the quotation by heart, and lay it up for future meditation and use.

I have never been able to make up my mind why it is so hard — I might say so impossible, without being far wrong — to make girls realize that a man has to be won over and over again. I don't mean that an attractive woman may not without much bother keep a husband in an attitude reasonably satisfactory. Most marriages that do not come to grief are likely

to be of the neutral sort: arrangements accepted in a sort of cool, business-like reasonableness on both sides; endured as necessary evils at worst, and at the best acquiesced in as a practical and common-sense *modus vivendi*. Wives are not often, I suppose, really content with an indifferent husband, but they seem without much difficulty to assume that a man who has once been in love with them is in duty bound to remain in love perpetually. As a matter of fact, a man does not, and he will not. If a man is in love with his wife at any time after the first six months of married life, it is because she has made him fall in love with her over and over again. She has at least used, consciously or unconsciously, especial art to retain his affection.

When you have a husband, keep two things in mind, and school yourself not to fret over them, but to accept them as part of the inflexible law of nature: First, that any man, even a lover, is still human; second, that it is the normal nature of a man's love to burn out rather quickly. The moment a woman falls in love, she is sure to feel that her hero is above

all the weaknesses that belong to the rest of humanity, and that his fidelity to her will remain unshaken and undiminished to the end of time. Absolute nonsense, my dear! He thinks the same about you, for the time being; but you know it is n't true, however much you wish that for his sake it might be. He will only have to see you at breakfast a sufficient number of times, perhaps with a headache and a doubtful temper, to discover that you are not entirely an angel yet. He may, and I hope he will, find you something much better adapted to daily life; but you must be prepared for the day of mutual disenchantment. You must be ready when it comes to do your part toward the reëstablishing of relations on a new basis, which may be more enduring than anything you could expect to find while you mooned about in that heavenly idiocy of regarding each other as superhuman. The delusions of the honeymoon are enchanting, but, like other enchantments, they are fugitive. They are like other flames, — to change the figure, — and cannot burn without consuming something. If you wish the fire to keep up, you must pro-

vide fresh fuel. The pity of it is that when they begin to fail, we are so apt to give ourselves up to wailing and weeping, or to protesting that the man we trusted has promised to see to it that the bonfire never grew less. Don't waste any time or strength in that sort of foolishness, when the fire of love seems to pale a little, but scrabble around, and see what you can find that will burn!

Since even a husband, then, is human, it is well to reckon with him as a man. The two strongest characteristics of the male animal — human, at least — are evidently vanity and the love of comfort. Sherman is rather an exceptional creature, or at least I think so, but even Sherman is not perfect when he is hungry. Men in general are pretty much alike, and no woman can reasonably hope to hold permanently the love of a husband unless she contrive in some way to feed him well and to flatter his vanity. I know you will think of the women who hold men by snubbing them, but the truth is that vanity is the chief motive there. Men find themselves piqued by difficulty, and their vanity incites them on. There

are some rag-doll little men who kiss humbly the hand that smites them, and “adore the wife that rules;” but they are not to be counted as real men. The husband who is treated with contempt, and who allows himself to be hen-pecked, must always be the weak sort of thing that he deserves to be. Any woman despises a husband that has n’t character enough to be her master, — unless she takes the maternal attitude, and pities him; but when the wife loves her husband as a mother, the husband seldom loves the wife at all. He lets her take care of him, and he loves himself. One of a married couple must be the head of the house, and any woman of any spirit will take that place if she can get it; — but she has nothing but contempt for the husband that allows her such a victory.

A woman may manage her husband, and every good wife will manage him when the proper occasion arises, but to manage a man does not necessarily lessen respect for him. It is part of the natural order of life that feminine *finesse* should in delicate situations prove more effective than masculine force;

and every woman understands this; but woe and the abomination of desolation to the husband that once allows his wife to bully him. Love goes out of the window, or up the chimney, or through the keyhole, or whatever way of escaping is most speedy, and never returns.

A man's vanity is the legitimate care of any worthy and loving wife. She will appeal to it when wisdom demands; she will take care not to foster it inordinately; she will recognize that nature beneficently endowed man with this weakness, that woman should have a means of leading him for his own good. She will, if she is all that a wife should be, gently snub him whenever she sees signs that his self-esteem is developing in lines which would tend to make him independent of her or too susceptible to the influence of others. A perfect wife will understand, in short, that Heaven has made her the guardian of her husband's welfare, and that the lever by which she is to control his character and his acts is his vanity. She will recognize the gravity of the trust, and she will treat the lever with delicacy and discretion accordingly.



All this wisdom you will resent just now, I suppose; in your present phase of affection you will rage at the idea that you could flatter the perfect man who has fallen to your lot through the especial grace of Heaven. So be it, my dear. Consider what I have said as applying only to every other wife on earth except yourself. It will help you to appreciate the position of your sisters, and if the time should ever come when you have to advise with any wife — having no need, of course, to resort to such measures yourself — how to turn aside a husband bent with masculine, well-meaning wrong-headedness upon going in a direction that means harm to him, you may find a hint in what I have been saying. You may tell her that for his own good she may wisely praise his good points, she may show him what a profound admiration she has for his good sense, and how sure she is he will make the wisest choice, and so forth and so on, until she is able to lead him in the right direction by suggestion and praise.

As for yourself, my dear child, after the first golden glow of the honeymoon has begun

to dazzle your eyes a little less than at first, so that you perceive dimly that there are things in your husband that you would possibly have otherwise, give the whole force of your mind to thinking up the things you can and should praise. I do not know by what good fortune it was that my mother gave me the advice she did when I was married; but she insisted most on this point: "Whenever you think of something to find fault with, don't rest until you have thought of something you admire in your husband just as strongly, and have told him so." Sherman is such a trump — But you'll hate Sherman, if I say a word more about him.

O you dear thing! You will never know what fun it is to give advice like this. You won't take much of it, but I know it is good, and some little bits of it will stick to you, and very likely will be of use some time; but the chief fun is to work out in my own mind how it is that I have made so great a success of married life. That sounds conceited, and I am not trying to take too much credit, or to lose sight of the fact that Providence has been

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so good to me; but I *have* made a success of married life; I know I have; and it gives me a glow to feel that what I have done has been good. So be as patient with my dissertations on matrimony as you can be, and get as much good out of them as possible.

One thing I want to add in conclusion. It would be foolish to show my letters to your *fiancé*. He is only a man, and he would pooh-pooh them, and prove that they are wrong, and foolish, and cold-blooded, and you would at least wish to believe him; but they really are right, and sensible, and oh, so wise! Besides which, they are fairly maudlin with soft-heartedness!

## XXXV

### "A COUNSEL OF PERFECTION"

THIS is the last, my dear; positively the last. I will even promise when I see you next week to go through all the wedding as if I were the most frivolous creature alive. I won't bore you with the very least bit of advice. Somehow in my last letter, however, I got off the track, and of course I have to finish what I started to say. I meant to say something of the way in which a wife is to make what Dean Swift — crabbed old cynic! — would call a cage; in other words, a home.

Some time, I think, I shall have to write a book on husband-breaking and husband-keeping, and when I do, I shall divide the means of managing a husband into three principal divisions: Making a Man Comfortable; Being Honest; Amusing a Man. Other heads might easily be thought of, but these seem to me to cover the ground with sufficient

completeness. If these three are properly observed, the marriage is sure to be happy.

For the sake of seeming thorough and systematic in my manual, I shall divide into sub-heads. I shall put under comfort, for instance, Food; Peace; and Little Ways. Then I shall discourse wisely, persuasively, inspiringly, under each topic. I spare you most of the book, but as it may never be written, I cannot let you off entirely. My conscience would reproach me too much for having deprived you of so much esoteric knowledge on matrimony.

Girls never realize the importance to the masculine animal of feeding. Many a girl have I known to lose excellent chances because at parties she foolishly made the man feed her instead of collecting provender for himself. One of the most useful social lessons I ever had was from an old lady who told me, when I was a young girl, to learn to go hungry rather than to have my partner remain un-gorged. I learned after very little experience that the surest way to be popular was to say to my escort at any party where supper had to

be skirmished for by the men: "Oh, I'm not hungry. Get me a sandwich, or anything, and then look after something for yourself." I have gone hungry many a time, and more than once my inward cravings have been made worse by a distant view of my partner solacing his soul on all the delicacies of the season, while I scantily nourished myself on a dry and meagre sandwich; but it paid. I never lacked for a supper partner, no matter how scarce men were. The boys told each other that I gave a fellow a chance to get things to eat, so there was some fun taking me out to supper. Such is masculine frailty, my dear; and wise is the woman who knows it, and takes account of it.

The importance of feeding a husband well has been dwelt upon by many an inspired writer, and the fresh and profound remarks with which I shall in my book on husband-taming illuminate the well-worn theme, I shall not set down here. It is enough for me to urge you to remember that the old saying about the way to a man's heart being through his stomach is practically true, — except in

the numerous cases where a man's heart *is* in his stomach, so that the road ends there. All other virtues, moreover, will in a man endure fasting better than love. In the masculine calendar of affection is no provision for a Lent!

Under the sub-head of Peace I shall discourse upon the restiveness of men under any form of feminine persistence, and the entire revolt of any husband under pressure of feminine nagging. A nagging wife is the most ingenious torment ever invented by the Fiend, and I have many a time wondered at the patience with which men endure wives that nag away at them like gad-flies. The women who read my book will not belong to that detestable class, but they may need to have their attention called to the fact that often a wife should hold her tongue when she has a perfectly logical right to speak. She is to recognize that her speaking may simply irritate her spouse, and in that case can do no possible good. Men are constantly saying that women are not logical, but no logic can make a man see that a reminder to him of having left a duty

undone is justifiable. A conscientious wife is apt to be so possessed with the idea of duty as constantly to be in danger of lessening her influence and alienating her husband by insisting upon giving good advice unseasonably. Never urge any course on your husband unless you have a fair reason to suppose you can effect some good. To remonstrate with a man for the sake of freeing yourself from a sense of responsibility, or, what is far more common and far worse, to relieve your exasperation at his shortcomings, is at once the height of selfishness and of stupidity.

Wives are, as a body, wonderfully generous in sparing their husbands worry over the details of domestic life. I have known hosts of women, teased and perplexed over difficulties in home affairs, who have shown their husbands only a smiling face, and hidden all annoyance. It is hardly just, perhaps, that women should have to bear so many of their burdens alone; but it is to be remembered that the men have their own bothers that we could n't understand enough to be any help in. The inevitable feminine desire to talk



about our troubles, and to be pitied — to make somebody else uncomfortable because we are perplexed and tired — is pure selfishness and petty weakness. I've done it, I am ashamed to confess; but I've been so humiliated afterward that I decided that it did not pay.

The importance of the Little Ways of men has never been properly appreciated as an element in matrimonial comfort. Sherman has a whim — he could n't tell you why — to have the articles on his dressing-table stand in certain positions. No servant that ever lived can be trusted to see to a detail like that. Every morning of my life, after the maid has done his room, I go in and set things as he likes them. Men have as many freaks and whims as women, only they do not fuss about them so much. They are apt, too, to be more tenacious in their tastes than we are; and if a wife once knows her husband's little ways, she seldom has to learn an entirely new set, as sometimes happens on the other side of the house. Men are as pleased and soothed by having their little tastes gratified as a cat is

by being stroked. Often the men are so funnily dull that they hardly know they have any preference, and still less do they notice that trouble has been taken to gratify it; but they unconsciously get to be comfortable and pleased, and in the end nothing ministers more to their good-nature, or more tends to make them feel that somehow their home is about the best place there is.

I must warn you, as emphatically as I can, that it is entirely idle for a wife to expect a husband to appreciate her trouble, or her thought, or her skill, in looking after all the trifling details of his existence. She must be content with results, and if she look for definite gratitude, she spoils all. You stroke a cat, and the beast purrs; you stroke a man, and he simply becomes amiable and easy to live with. It would never occur to him to make any expression of gratitude so definite as a purr.

It should be one of the first concerns of a bride carefully to study what her husband likes. She is not to ask him, for in the first place he would disclaim having any particular little fancies, and in the second he is very sel-

dom able to tell if he would. Men are n't clever about themselves, and the woman must use her wit to find out things for herself. This need of studying a husband is constantly preached; but is generally meant to apply to matters of obvious weight. The real and important application is to the minute and apparently trivial details of daily life.

The second great division of my subject — I've got it written out on a piece of paper, so that I can be systematic — was, Being Honest. No woman who is not a fool tells her husband everything. The old fol-de-rol talk about there being no secrets between those who love is idiocy and nonsense. What I mean by honesty is not your forcing your husband to know every trumpery thing you have in mind. I have squarely refused to tell Sherman things that he wanted to know: but I have always made him feel that I had reasons for keeping silent that were to be respected. Honesty between husband and wife is that entire integrity which enforces respect. The husband must believe that his wife could die in slow tortures, but could n't lie to him. He must have abso-

lute faith in her dealing with him without the shadow of trickery or deception. To dwell on this would make my letter so heavy that a consideration of extra postage forces me to stop; but the husband and wife who do not believe in the honesty of each other to each other must be a wretched pair. They must at best supply the place of love with a poor makeshift.

Men — to come to the last item of my sermon — must be amused. They must be amused sometimes against their will; and yet it is idle to suppose a man can be trained to like that against which his natural tastes rebel. If your husband does not really like going to the theatre, or going to dinners, or any other form of diversion, do not suppose you can make him like it by keeping him at it. You may have to drag him about somewhat for the sake of preventing his falling into a rut, or for the sake of keeping yourself sufficiently in touch with the world to be entertaining; but put it down to his credit as self-denial, and don't make the mistake of thinking he is really pleased when he is n't. The woman who is fond of social life when her husband is not

should devote herself to exaggerating every social sacrifice he makes for her. She may be able to bring him to the point when the idea of self-denial, of being a martyr, of having made so great concessions to his wife's happiness, will appeal to him so strongly as to make him rejoice in a social function as an occasion on which he may add one more star to his crown of marital sainthood! Sometimes, in this roundabout way, men may be amused even by the things they do not like!

Be amusing at home, my child, whatever you are elsewhere. Tell your husband the funny story you heard at luncheon, the news you picked up in the course of your calls, the good thing you read. The worst possible mistake you can make in regard to any man you marry is to suppose — this is what I said pages back, I don't remember just where, and at any rate I must repeat it to enforce it on your mind — that his love will last. It will not; it has to be recreated, and the triumph of womanhood is to recreate it as often as it dies, just as the sun again and again makes a new day.

I consider that rather a poetic flourish, and I should stop with it, only I am afraid you will rebel against my saying love has to be recreated; so I will put it another way, and say that in the natural course of earthly events love would die, and it is the part of the wife to nourish it until with it grows up a friendship, a comradeship, a mutual necessity of husband and wife for each other, which lasts as long as life. Put it any way you please, so long as you realize and in your conduct of life recognize that the love of your husband is a thing to be looked after with at least as much and as constant care as the style of your gowns, and that it must be watered and tended like a choice plant if it is to be kept alive.

Heavens! How flowery I am getting, and how my metaphors mix themselves in spite of me! The theme is too big for me; I shall never write my great book on husbands. But bring Mr. Ashmore on a visit as soon after you are married as possible, and let me look him over. I can then tell you more in an hour than I could write in a week. Men are all alike, my dear, — of course after their individual kinds;

and women are all different. That gives us an enormous advantage, and if we were only clever enough to use this, we might easily and absolutely rule the world. However, we do come fairly near to doing that, as it is. We can classify men, and know how they are likely to act, while they are always in the dark until they have taken each distinct woman and studied her by herself; and by the time they know anything about her, very likely she has completely changed, or it is too late for the knowledge to be of much use anyway. And the beauty of it is that we can't spoil things by telling the men all about ourselves. We should be fools enough to do it when we are in love, but fortunately we can't, for we don't know!

A matrimonial world is like England, always best under the feminine rule; and you shall have a fair chance to rule your world, my child, if you will come, and act on my advice. I do not in the least mind boasting, or seeming conceited, because I know I can make my promises good. Come early, before your matrimonial habits are settled, for I am

## A WORLDLY GODMOTHER 305

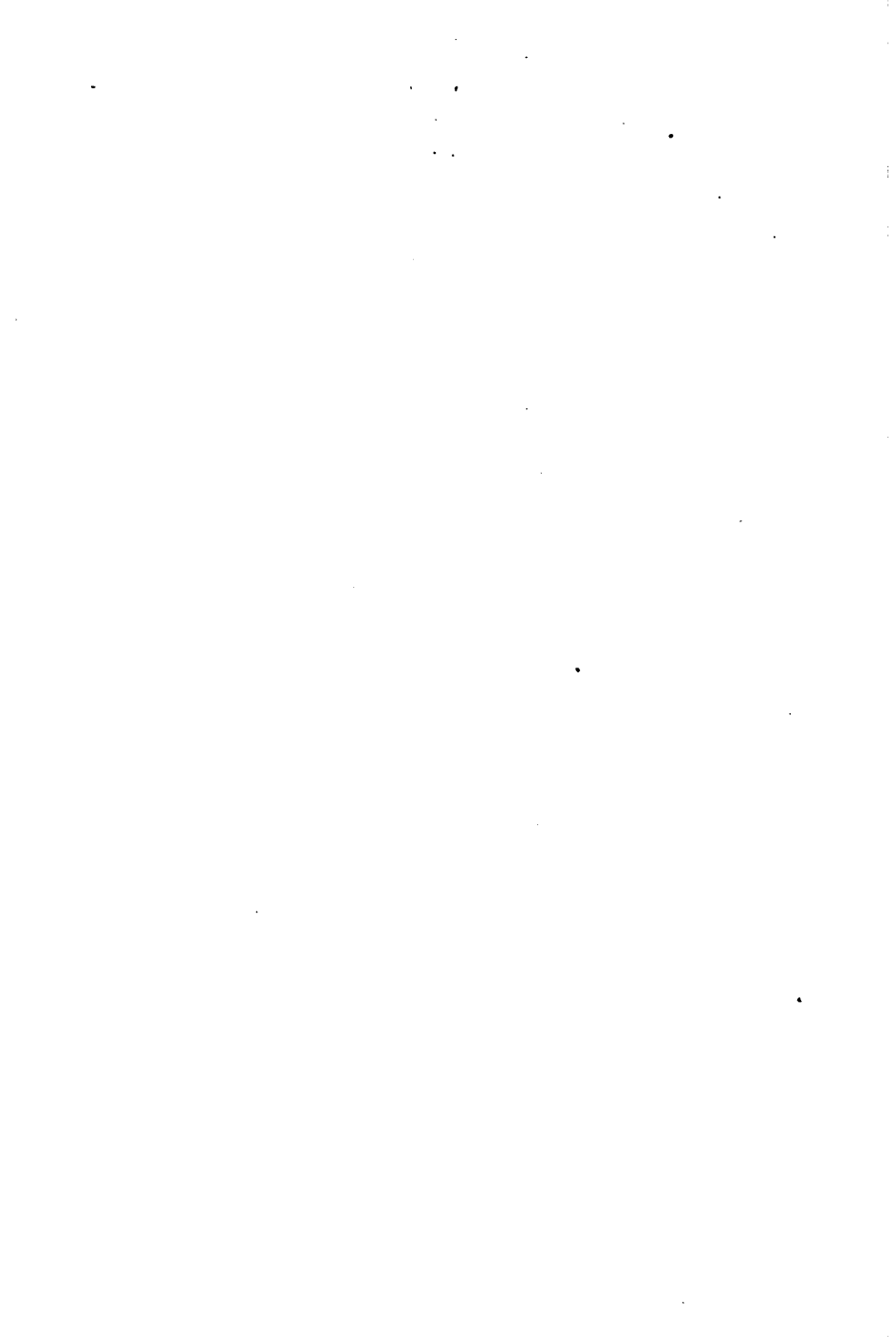
anxious you should begin well. If you will be guided, though I say it who should leave it to others to say, you will have reason all your life long to bless the Fates that, whatever else they did or did not do for you, they blessed your lot with a worldly godmother!

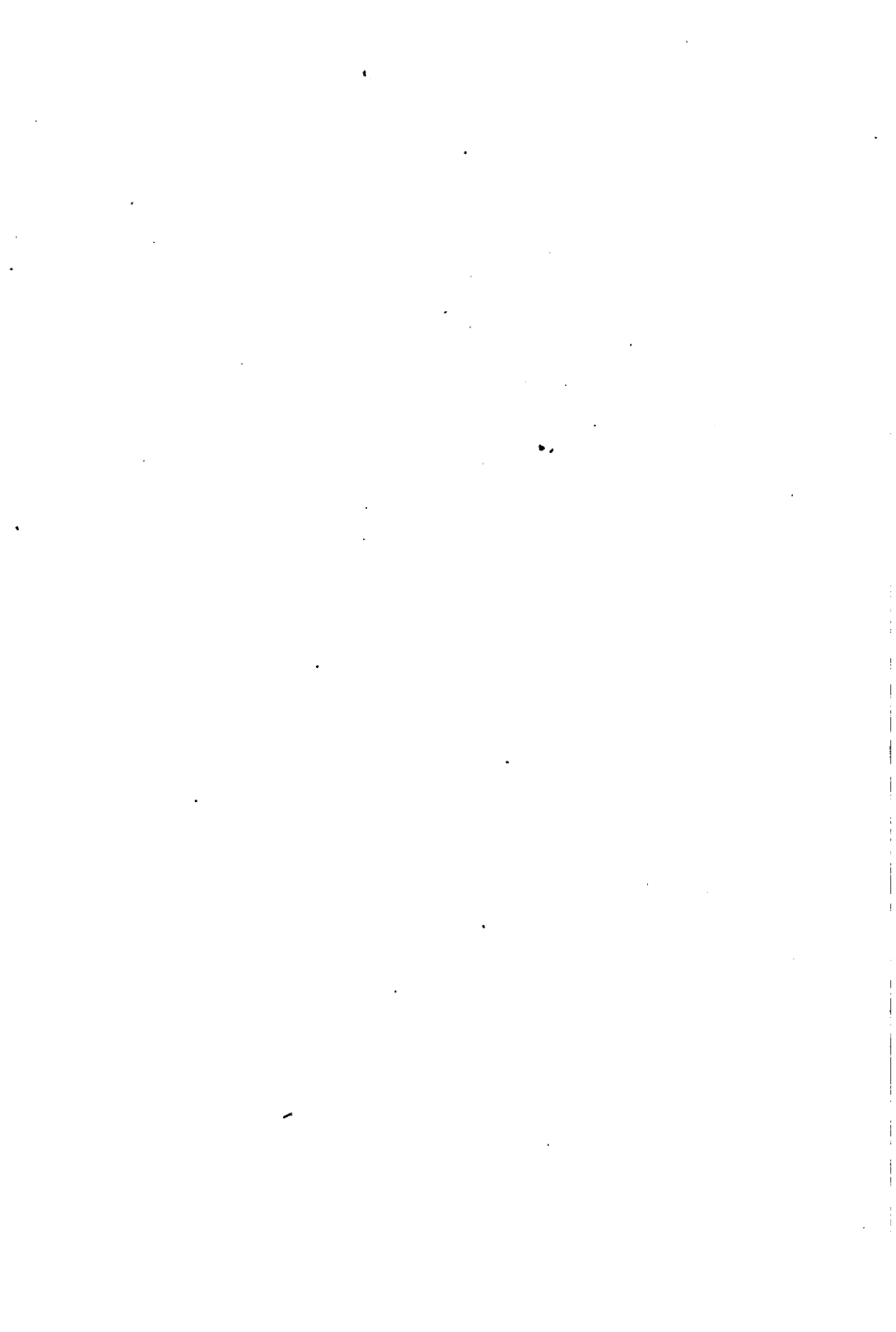


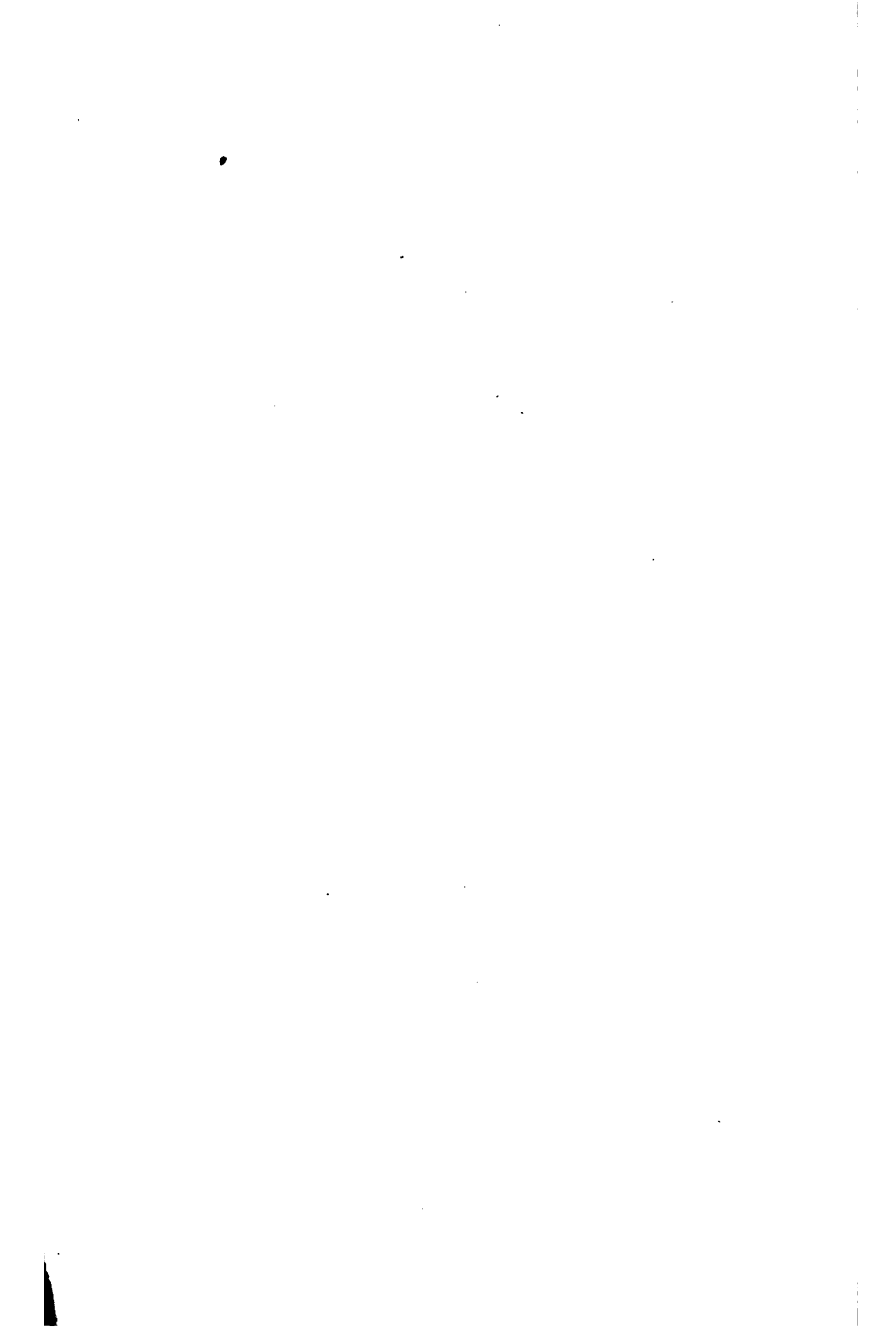
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